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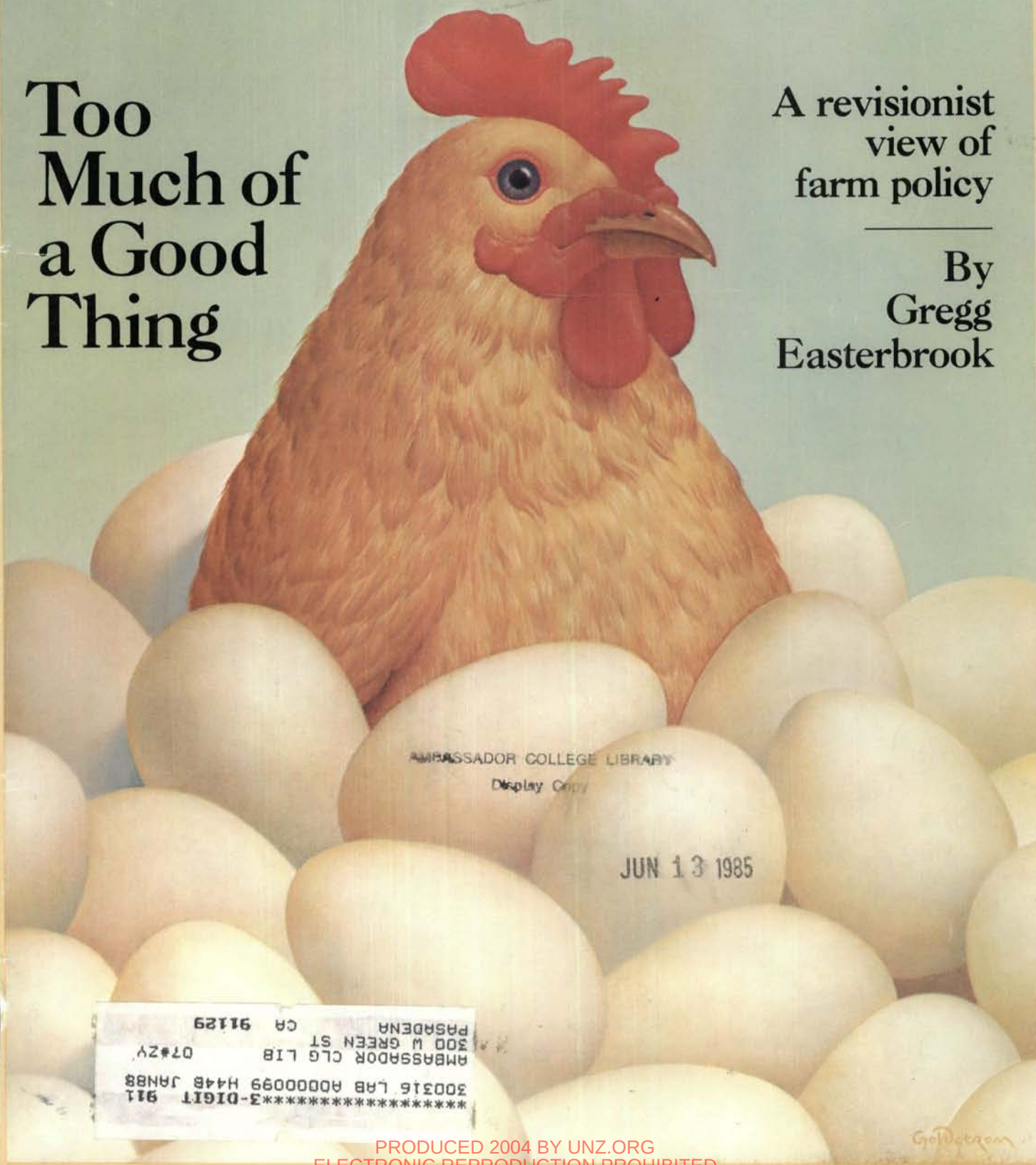
The Atlantic

ROBERT McNAMARA AND HANS BETHE ON TRUE DEFENSE / JAMES FALLOWS ON HOUSTON

Too
Much of
a Good
Thing

A revisionist
view of
farm policy

By
Gregg
Easterbrook



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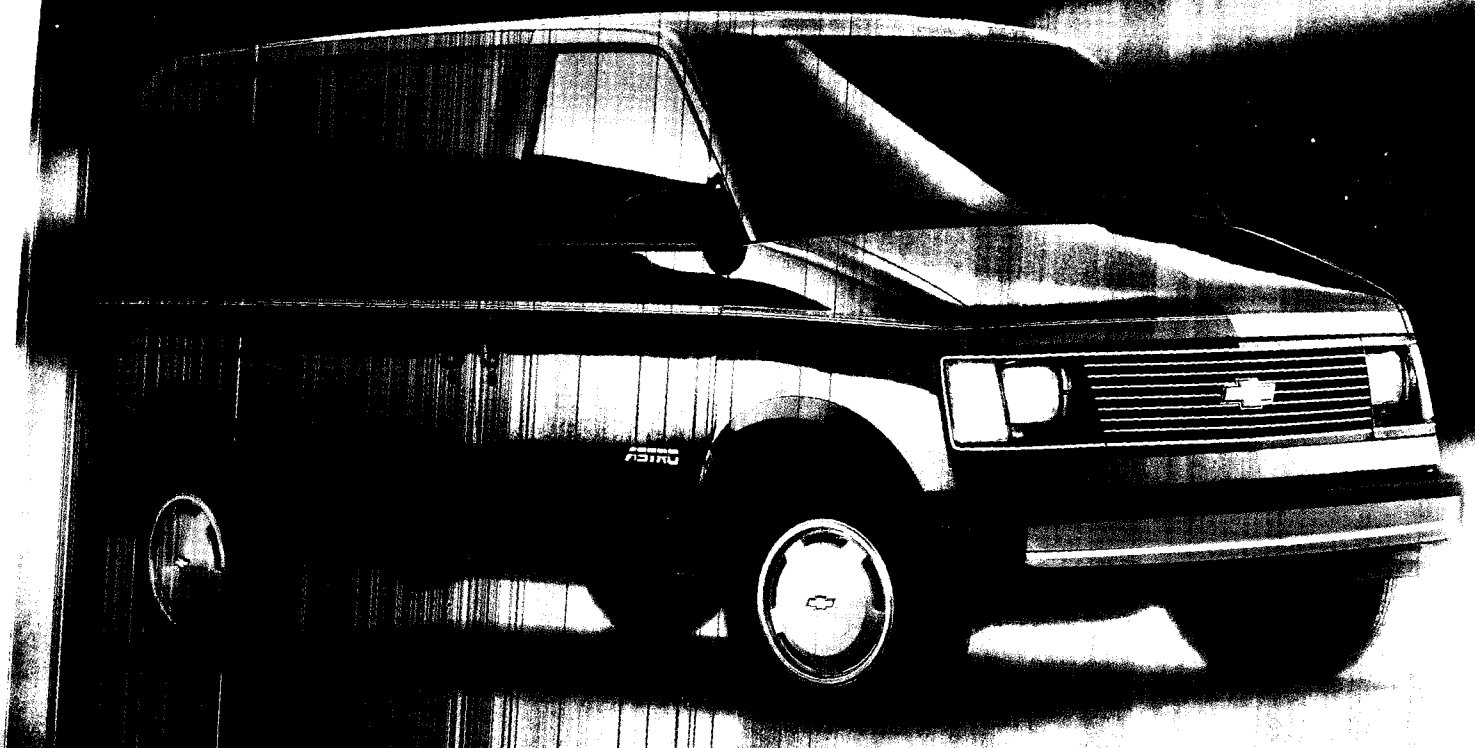
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHANGING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

James Fallows's hymn in praise of the "permanent revolution" of American capitalism ("The Changing Economic Landscape," March *Atlantic*) is surely the most honest and articulate presentation of Yuppie economics currently in print. The chief effect of his clarity and honesty, however, is to suggest just how barbarous and self-destructive the national cult of opportunity really is. Yes, America is a nation of immigrants who pulled up stakes in search of a better life. But too often better has meant only having more money, and the price of that money has been a restless, nomadic existence that tears down cities and towns as fast as it builds them, scatters families and friends to the far corners of the continent, and deprives the soul of all serenity, civility, and settled habits. The policy of "people, not places" is simply a policy of displaced (and therefore diminished) persons.

LARRY TOOL
Pleasant Hill, Calif.

RICHARD PALKOVIC
Palo Alto, Calif.

James Fallows rightly identifies ruthless management, concentrating on short-term profit, as a major factor in destroying American manufacturing. What he missed, in nearly eighteen pages of prose, is the primary reason for our economic decline—the stranglehold of military spending on U.S. industry. With one third of our fixed capital assets tied up in a cost-maximizing military economy, it is no wonder that we can no longer compete in our own—let alone the world's—marketplace.

In his article Mr. Fallows tours the factory of a military contractor in Austin, introducing us to successful employees. "Perhaps [their gains] have come at the expense of midwestern steelworkers, although it is hard to see a direct connection," he says. The connection is easier to see when you realize that in the five-year period from 1975 to 1979 the federal government took \$122 billion more in taxes from the industrial Midwest than it spent there. During this period the balance of taxation versus spending favored Sun Belt states (like Texas) by \$112 billion. Legitimate civilian manufacturing has been looted to fund de-

fense contractors, chiefly in the Sun Belt.

Consumer demand for goods has not abated, just as Mr. Fallows states. But goods like high-quality, fuel-efficient cars, tape recorders, and sewing machines seemingly cannot be made in the United States. American management has offered up the Japanese, with their undeniably lower labor costs, as scapegoats for the inability of U.S. industry to produce. But the facts show this argument to be weak. In 1978 per-hour labor costs for steelworkers in Japan were \$10.42, compared with \$14.72 for U.S. steelworkers. Since 1978 the difference (discounting exchange-rate differences between dollars and yen) has been decreasing rapidly. Moreover, labor-rate differences are more than offset by the higher cost of Japanese raw materials. Steel companies that invest in oil or defense contracting instead of new steel-making equipment will never be competitive in steel, no matter how well their workers perform.

It is surprising that in James Fallows's otherwise well-written and compassionate article neither he nor any of the economic experts he quotes discusses the major facilitating factor for the open-market system. Ironically, it is the one economic force President Reagan likes to mock the most—namely, the federal government.

It is the government that develops and procures its defense goods largely from firms located in California and Texas. And it is the accelerated defense expenditures under President Reagan that now account for the well-being of those states (and, to be fair, some other states as well, such as Maryland and Massachusetts). Here in California I have heard it stated (and to some extent perhaps exaggerated) that each new defense-industry position ultimately provides eleven new outside (non-defense) jobs in the local economy. It is the government that supports the majority of military bases and other defense facilities located in the Sun Belt. It is the government, through its Social Security and Medicare programs, that supports the medical, construction, franchise, and

CLASSICS ON CASSETTES

BACH

- 331488-391482. Bach: Brandenburg Concertos, 1 to 6 (Complete)**—Kapp, Philharmonia Virtuosi of New York (Counts as 2—Digital—CBS Masterworks)
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- 326983. Bach: Organ Masterpieces**—*Toccata & Fugue in D Minor*; etc. A. Newman (Sine Qua Non)
- 171504. Switched-On-Bach**—Mood versions of *Air on a G String*; more, Wendy Carlos (Columbia)
- 319434. Bach: Sonatas for Viola da Gamba & Harpsichord**—Yo-Yo Ma, cello; Ken Cooper, harpsichord (Digital—CBS Masterworks)
- 316216. Bach's Suite No. 2 for Flute; Telemann: Flute Suite in A Minor**—J. Baker, A. Newman, others (Digital—Vox Cum Laude)
- 331470-391474. Bach: Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1**—Anthony Newman, harpsichord (Counts as 2—Digital—Vox Cum Laude)

BEETHOVEN

- 273409. Beethoven: 3 Piano Sonatas**—Moonlight, Appassionata, Pathétique, Horowitz, piano (Columbia)
- 325340. Beethoven: "Hammerklavier" Sonata; Il Bagatelles**—Rudolf Serkin (Masterworks Portrait)
- 332049. Beethoven: Piano Trios No. 4 & 5**—Barenboim, Zukerman, DuPre (Vox Cum Laude)
- 330084. Beethoven: Overtures**—Coriolan, Egmont, Fidelio, Lenore, Sir Georg Solti, Chicago Sym. (London Jubilee)
- 333442. Beethoven: Septet in E-Flat Major**—performed by Boston Symp. Chamber Players (Nonesuch Silver Series)
- 332122. Beethoven: String Quartet in A Minor (Op. 132)**—Fitzwilliam Quartet (Digital—London)
- 232496. Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 (Eroica)**—Bernstein and New York Philharmonic (Columbia)
- 331108. Beethoven: Symphony No. 7**—Tilson Thomas, English Chamber Orch. (CBS Masterworks)
- 252874. Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 (Choral)**—Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orch. (Columbia)
- 325654-395657. Beethoven: Piano Concertos No. 1 & 5 (Emperor)**—Brendel, piano (Counts as 2—Vox)
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- 331991. Beethoven: Violin Sonatas No. 7 & 10**—Zukerman, Barenboim (Vox Cum Laude)

BRAHMS

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- 333757. Brahms: Serenade No. 1 in D**—G. Schwarz, Los Angeles Chamber Orch. (Digital—Nonesuch)
- 330118. Brahms: String Quintets in F and G Major**—Boston Sym. Chamber Players (Digital—Nonesuch)
- 328039. Brahms: Symphony No. 3; Haydn Variations**—Mehta, New York Phil. (CBS Masterworks)
- 326280. Brahms: Violin Concerto**—Isaac Stern; Ormandy, Philadelphia Orch. (CBS Great Performances)
- 329110. Brahms/Schoenberg: Piano Quartet**—a masterful transcription! Comissiona, Baltimore Sym. (Digital—Vox Cum Laude)

DEBUSSY

- 330605. Debussy: Greatest Hits**—*Clair de lune, Reverie*; etc. Bernstein, Ormandy, etc. (Columbia)
- 322826. Debussy: La Mer; Nocturnes**—Michael Tilson Thomas, Philharmonia Orch. (Digital—CBS Masterworks)
- 328005. Debussy: Images (complete); Estampes; etc. —Ivan Moravec, pianist (Digital—Vox Cum Laude)**
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- 328401. Debussy: Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp; Syrinx for Solo Flute**—plus works by Ravel, Faure, etc. Orpheus Trio (Digital—Vanguard Audiophile)

HAYDN

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- 257956. Haydn: Symphony No. 101 (Clock), No. 103 (Drum Roll)**—Bernstein, NY Phil. (Columbia)
- 332569. Haydn: Symphony No. 94 (Surprise), No. 100 (Military)**—Solti, London Phil. (Digital—London)

MOZART

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- 294264. Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 21 (Elvira Madigan) and No. 17**—Ashkenazy plays, conducts Philharmonia Or. (London)
- 326975. Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 4; Adagio; Rondos**—Zukerman plays, conducts St. Paul Chamber Orch. (CBS Masterworks)

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- 325365. Mozart: Eine Kleine Nachtmusik; Symphony No. 40**—Casals, Marlboro Festival Orch. (Masterworks Portrait)
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SCHUBERT

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- 317677. Schubert: Symphony No. 8 (Unfinished); Rosamunde Overture and Ballet Music**—von Karajan, Berlin Philharmonic (Angel)

TCHAIKOVSKY

- 312777. Tchaikovsky: Capriccio Italian; Rimsky-Korsakoff: Capriccio Espagnol; etc. —Bernstein (CBS Great Performances)**
- 308874. Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 1**—Gavrilov, Kitaenko cond. Moscow Radio/TV Sym. Orch. (Col/Melodiya)
- 329169. Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 4**—Lorin Maaazel, Cleveland Orch. (CBS Masterworks)
- 245399. Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (Pathe-tique)**—Ormandy and Phila. Orch. (Columbia)
- 326249. Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture; Marche Slav; Romeo & Juliet**—Bernstein, New York Philharmonic (CBS Great Performances)
- 293191. Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto; Meditation**—Stern; Rostropovich, National Sym. (Columbia)
- 231563. Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake and Sleeping Beauty Ballet Suites**—Ormandy, Philadelphia Orchestra (Columbia)
- 304352-394353. Tchaikovsky: The Nutcracker (complete)**—Andrew Davis, Toronto Symphony Orch. (Counts as 2—Columbia)
- 330555. Tchaikovsky: Greatest Hits—Waltz Of The Flowers; 1812 Overture; more. Bernstein, NY Phil.; Ormandy, Phila. (Columbia)**

BAROQUE

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- 332130. Bruckner: Symphony No. 4**—Walter, Columbia Symphony Orch. (Masterworks Portrait)

- 333518. Bruckner: Symphony No. 7**—Chaillly, RSO Berlin (Digital—London)

- 333856. Chopin: Greatest Hits—Grande Valse Brillante, Military Polonaise, Minute Waltz; etc. Various artists (CBS Masterworks)**

- 306183. Chopin: Piano Concerto No. 1**—Murray Perahia; Zubin Mehta and New York Philharmonic (Columbia)



MODERN

- 329714. Bartok: Concerto for Orchestra; Dance Suite**—Solti conducts Chicago Sym. (Digital—London)
- 325316. Bartok: Violin Concerto No. 2; Rhapsodies 1-2**—Isaac Stern; Bernstein, New York Phil. (Masterworks Portrait)
- 325274. Berg: Lulu Suite**—also works by Webern and Schoenberg, Philadelphia Orch., Ormandy (Masterworks Portrait)
- 263293. Bolling: Suite For Flute and Jazz Piano**—Rampal and Bolling (Columbia)
- 324780. Bolling: Suite for Cello and Jazz Piano**—Yo-Yo Ma, Bolling (CBS)
- 309500. Copland: "Billy The Kid" (Ballet Suite); Four Dance Episodes from "Rodeo"**—Bernstein cond. (CBS Great Performances)
- 326439. Copland: Rodeo; Dance Symphony; El Salon Mexico; Fanfare for Common Man**—Dorati, Detroit Sym. (Digital—London)
- 240473. Copland: Appalachian Spring (complete)**—Copland and London Symphony (Columbia)
- 329060. Falla: Nights In The Gardens Of Spain; Three-Cornered Hat (Suite No. 2); etc. —Osorio, piano; de la Fuente, Xalapa Sym. (Digital—Vox Cum Laude)**
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- 318451. Ravel: Bolero; Pavane; Daphnis Et Chloe (Suite No. 2)**—Andre Previn, London Symphony (Angel)

- 331447. Ravel: Ma Mere L'Oye (Mother Goose); Le Tombeau De Couperin; etc. —Dutoit, Montreal Sym. (Digital—London)**

- 324533. Respighi: Feste Romane; Pines & Fountains Of Rome**—Dutoit, Orch. de Montreal (Digital—London)

- 326223. Schoenberg: Pelleas & Melisande**—Daniel Barenboim and Orchestre de Paris (CBS Masterworks)

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- 333450. Shostakovich: Symphony No. 8**—Haitink, Amsterdam Concertgebouw (Digital—London)

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- 281493. Stravinsky: Rite Of Spring**—Zubin Mehta, NY Phil. (Columbia)

ROMANTICS

- 325282. Bruch: Violin Concerto; Lalo: Symphonie Espagnole**—Francescatti; Mitropoulos, Schippers, New York Philharmonic (Masterworks Portrait)

- 326454. Dvorak: Cello Concerto; Bruch: Kol Nidrei**—Harrell, cello; Ashkenazy cond. (Digital—London)

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- 325183. Dvorak: Symphony No. 9 (New World)**—Solti, Chicago Symp. Orch. (Digital—London)

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- 228684. Grieg: Peer Gynt Suites 1 and 2; Bizet: Carmen Suites**—Leonard Bernstein and the New York Phil. (Columbia)

- 325381. Grieg: Piano Concerto; Schumann: Piano Concerto**—Leon Fleisher; Szell, Cleveland Orch. (Masterworks Portrait)

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- 317685. Mahler: Symphony No. 4**—Ameling, Previn, Pittsburgh Sym. (Angel)

- 325357. Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde**—soloists, New York Philharmonic under Bruno Walter (Masterworks Portrait)

- 305730. Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 (Italian); Overtures**—Andre Previn, London Symphony (Angel)

332056. Mendelssohn: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; etc. Zinman, Rochester Philharmonic (Digital—Vox Cum Laude)

310698. Offenbach: *Gaite Parisienne*; *Saint-Saens: Danse Macabre*; etc. Maazel, Orch. National de France (Columbia)

330589. Rachmaninoff: *Greatest Hits—Vocalise*, etc. (CBS Masterworks)

245043. Rachmaninoff: *Piano Concertos No. 1 & 2*—Ashkenazy, Previn, London Sym. (London)

314260. Sallieri: *Sinfonia Veneziana*; more—Pesko and London Symphony (CBS Masterworks)

234237. Schumann: *Piano Concerto*; *Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto No. 1*—Rudolf Serkin, Ormandy, Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

225888. Smetana: *Moldau, Bartered Bride Overture, Dances*; etc. Bernstein, NY Phil. (Columbia)

310870-390872. Johann Strauss: *Greatest Waltzes* Ormandy, Szell, Bernstein (Count as 2—Columbia)

321844-391847. Verdi: *La Traviata—Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*. Featuring Placido Domingo and Teresa Stratas (Counts as 2—Elektra)

310086. Wagner: *Overtures Flying Dutchman, Rienzi*, etc. Maazel, Philharmonia Orch. (Columbia)

330654. Weber: *Music For Wind Ensemble—6 Waltzes, Concertino for Oboe & Winds*, etc. Jean-Claude Malgoire conducts this "Music For A Sunday Afternoon" (CBS Masterworks)

334714-394718. Glenn Gould—Bach, Vol. 2. *French Suites (Nos. 1-6): Overture In The French Style (Counts as 2—CBS Masterworks)*

246843. Horowitz Plays Chopin—Mazurkas, Etudes, many more (Columbia)

327007. Patrick Gleason's Computer Realization of Vivaldi's Four Seasons (Digital—Varese Sarabande)

328112. Lili Kraus Plays Bartok—Hungarian Peasant Songs & Folk Songs, Rondas; Sonatina, etc. (Vanguard)

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313767. Ruth Laredo Plays Ravel—La Valse, Mirrors, etc. (CBS Masterworks)

326603. Ivan Moravec plays Schumann & Brahms. Kinderszenen; Intermezzo; more (Digital—Nonesuch)

331371. Christopher Parkening & The Guitar. Handel, Couperin, Satie, Scarlatti, more (Angel)

280610. Jean-Pierre Rampal Greatest Hits—Debussy's Girl With The Flaxen Hair; Handel's Largo, etc. (Columbia)

319582. Jean-Pierre Rampal Plays Scott Joplin. The Entertainer, etc. (CBS)

332502. Andre-Michel Schub Plays Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy—also fantasies by Chopin and Mendelssohn (Digital—Vox Cum Laude)

331132. Andres Segovia—Espana. Works by Granados, Albeniz, Rodrigo, etc. (MCA)

331116. Andres Segovia plays works by Bach, Sor, Villa-Lobos, more (MCA)

311647. Isaac Stern 60th Anniversary Celebration. With Zukerman, Perlman, Mehta, etc. (Columbia)

331439. Isaac Stern and Alexander Zakin. Enesco: Violin Sonata No. 3; also works by Dvorak, etc. (CBS Masterworks)

309237. Daniel Varsano—Erik Satie Piano Music. *Gymnopedies, Sonatine Bureaucratique*, many others (Columbia)

319848. Andre Watts—Live In Tokyo. Works by Ravel, Brahms, Debussy, Haydn, etc. (Digital—CBS Masterworks)

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322347. Marilyn Horne—Live At La Scala. Music by Granados, Handel, Stephen Foster, Copland, more (CBS Masterworks)

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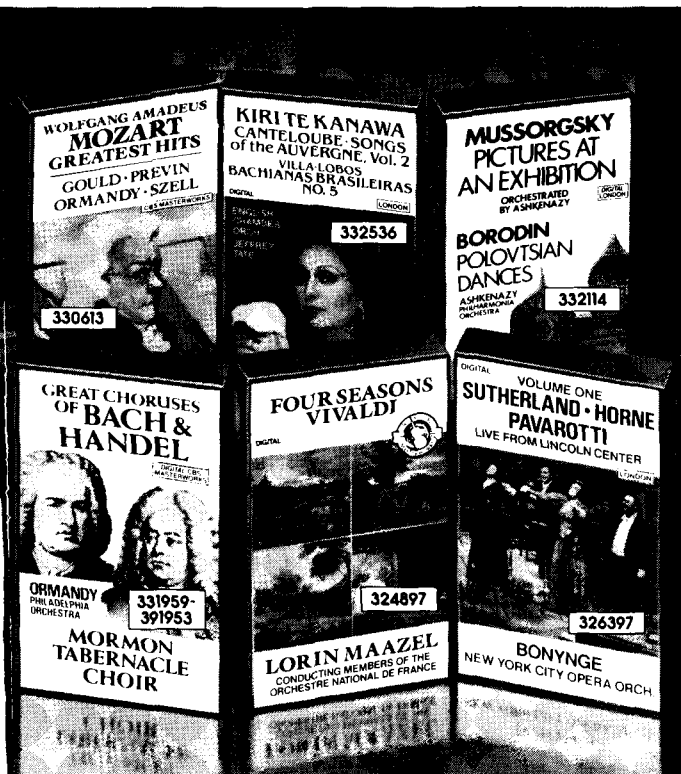
321463. Beverly Sills and Andre Kostelanetz—Music of Victor Herbert. *Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life*, etc. (Angel)

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324772. Kiri Te Kanawa—Songs of the Auvergne, Vol. 1—Canteloube's songs (Digital—London)

329722. Wagner: Lohengrin (Highlights)—Peter Hofmann, tenor; Bayreuth Festival Orch. & Chorus (CBS Masterworks)

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318436. Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade—Yevgeny Svetlanov and the London Symphony Orch. (Angel)

325100. Saint-Saens: Carnival of the Animals—also works by Debussy, Satie, Philip Jones Brass Ensemble (Digital—London)

331082. Saint-Saens: Symphony No. 3 (Organ)—Hurlford; Dutoit, Montreal Symphony (Digital—London)

320424. Richard Strauss: Ein Heldenleben—Dichterow, violin; Mehta and NY Phil. (Digital—CBS Masterworks)

202796. Richard Strauss: Also Sprach Zarathustra—Bernstein, New York Philharmonic (Columbia)

326447. Verdi: Overtures—La Forza del Destino, I Vespri Siciliani, Nabucco, etc. Chailly, National Philharmonic (Digital—London)

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331140. Jorge Bolet Plays Liszt—Annees de Pelerinage (Suisse). Thrilling score (Digital—London)

325886. Liona Boyd—Live In Tokyo. Works by Dowland, Saler, Falla, etc. (Digital—CBS Masterworks)

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service industries in Arizona and Florida. Thus it is the movement of dollars from the U.S. Treasury into the Sun Belt that has largely permitted the economic growth of those latter states. How could Mr. Fallows miss the obvious impact of those government dollars?

A. DANIEL ELIASON
Santa Barbara, Calif.

WAR IN CAMBODIA

By visiting no more than the border camps of Cambodia and accepting resistance propaganda at face value, Stephen J. Morris ("Vietnam's Vietnam," January *Atlantic*) does scant service to scholarship and presents a scarcely recognizable view of the country.

The effectiveness of and popular support for the resistance forces, particularly the non-Communist elements, seem to be considerably exaggerated. I was in Siem Reap three weeks after the attack in early 1984 to which Morris refers. It was then touted as one of the biggest operations of the war, in which the Khmer Rouge claimed to have captured Siem Reap. The extent of the capture proved to be the burning down of some wooden huts early one morning. Most journalists in Bangkok treat such claims with the skepticism they deserve.

The above operation and practically every other significant attack on Vietnamese/PRK forces has been the work of the Communist Khmer Rouge, not the non-Communist KPNLF, who were well known for staying in their border camps (since lost) to profit from smuggling and the sale of relief aid.

Morris appears to believe that with sufficient aid the non-Communist resistance forces could somehow become dominant in the coalition. This is wishful thinking of the most dangerous kind. The Khmer Rouge are dominant not just because of their military aid from China but also because of their experience as a guerrilla force, their willingness to travel deep within the country, and (as Morris points out) the availability of a poor-peasant recruiting base. The non-Communists, on the other hand, are essentially urbanites stranded in the jungle (or, rather, the border camps); their numbers tend to decline as supporters leave for abroad or the dull but safe surroundings of Thai refugee camps. Some among them are courageous and honorable men; others, however, are graduates of the notoriously

corrupt and ineffective Lon Nol army or simply warlords who fought a bitter and bloody war among themselves in 1979-1980 to gain control of the lucrative smuggling trade. Whatever one may think of the non-Communists in Cambodia, their chances of gaining any sort of power by military force are precisely nil.

The unpalatable truth is that the only beneficiary of a Vietnamese withdrawal (in the absence of a peace settlement) would be the Khmer Rouge, a fact well understood by every Cambodian I've spoken with in the PRK-controlled area. Morris acknowledges the relief with which the Vietnamese invasion was greeted. If that relief did not last, it was not because the "initially conciliatory policies" were changed (they were not) but rather because Pol Pot and his forces have been waiting in the wings, growing stronger on Western and Chinese aid. And it is a measure of the power of Pol Pot and his supporters that the coalition has been unable to dump him despite the very negative effect of his presence on its image.

Morris seriously misrepresents the Vietnamese position on Cambodia. As has recently been said in Hanoi to the Australian and Indonesian foreign ministers (the position was little different when Morris wrote his article), the non-Communist leaders *may* return to Cambodia and *may* participate in elections under international supervision provided only that they break with Pol Pot.

PAUL K. CUMMINGS
Sydney, Australia

Stephen J. Morris replies:

Paul Cummings is a director of Orbit Tours, a travel company that has been selected by the Vietnamese Communist government to organize sympathetic Australian visitors for guided tours of Vietnam and Vietnamese-occupied Cambodia!

Readers of *The Atlantic* who wish to read honest accounts of the current situation in Cambodia would be advised to consult *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, especially the article by John McBeth (2/16/84) that confirms the seriousness of Khmer Rouge attacks and the one by Paul Quinn-Judge (9/27/84) that quotes from the Phnom Penh regime on the seriousness of the operations of all three factions of the resistance throughout the country. On Hanoi's public unwillingness to allow internationally supervised elections in Cambodia (while spreading

rumors in private to the contrary), see McBeth's article in the same magazine (2/14/85).

Those who doubt that Hanoi abandoned its initially conciliatory policies in favor of supervising a repressive police state in Cambodia should read Elisabeth Becker's splendid articles in *The Washington Post* (2/28/83 and 3/1/83). The second of these, along with an article by William Shawcross in *The New York Review of Books* (5/10/84), emphasizes the hypocrisy of Vietnamese propaganda against the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese having installed a regime headed by former Khmer Rouge functionaries. One hopes that Shawcross's remarkable BBC documentary *The Mekong* will be shown in this country, since it gives visual evidence of the kind of totalitarian state Hanoi has created throughout Indochina. The human-rights situation in Cambodia today is dealt with extensively in a report by the Lawyers' Committee for International Human Rights, which has interviewed refugees inside Cambodia. The conclusions are presented by Floyd Abrams and Diande Orentlicher in *The Wall Street Journal* (4/8/85): "In most of Cambodia today, in areas controlled by the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea, the rule of law is not respected in any serious sense. For thousands of political prisoners who inhabit its jails, beatings are commonplace and more sophisticated forms of torture are usual."

Perhaps Cummings should change the name of his travel agency to Gulag Tours.

A NEW PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Robert Reich's "Toward a New Public Philosophy" (May *Atlantic*) includes at least one very serious error and one overwhelming contradiction.

The "liberal versus conservative" framework is useful for pre-campaign posturing, but it often leads to unacceptable rewritings of history. When the "liberals" replaced the "conservatives" in the 1960s, they arrived with an extreme commitment to "discipline" in the Soviet Union. They became "doves" only as an apparent by-product of pre-campaign maneuvering to get rid of a southern President in 1968.

The contradiction is more dangerous, because it poses a threat to the future of all countries, not just ours. Reich's closing outline of a "new public philosophy"

gives equal weight to “national economic competitiveness” and “global collaboration.” He cannot have it both ways. Put simply, economic competitiveness either moves *all* industries to low-wage areas (our high-tech industries now slide into depression) or relentlessly drives down our wages to poverty levels. Global economic collaboration, a wholly laudable purpose, requires *less* competition, not more; “national economic competitiveness” is just contemporary jargon for economic imperialism and endless trade wars. The only way to head this off is broad multilateral agreements to divide the world’s business among all competitors. This is not an ideological matter; some competitors are “capitalists,” some are “socialists,” some are combinations of both, and some are neither. This outcome would be no more Keynesian than supply-side, neither of which is a useful guide to the future.

FREDERICK C. THAYER
Professor
Graduate School of Public and
International Affairs
University of Pittsburgh

Nothing in Robert Reich’s new public philosophy is new other than, perhaps, the new frontiers of audacity he brings to discussions of public policy. Robert Reich is above all else a planner. Like all planners, he lacks appreciation for the role of prices in a market economy in allocating resources and arranging the spontaneous order of a free society. Absent that understanding, he projects himself into the role of social and economic arbiter to fill what he perceives to be an anarchic void. F. A. Hayek calls it “the fatal conceit.” Whatever, it is a dangerous state of mind—a presumptuousness that, history teaches us, leads to a loss of political freedom and economic well-being.

EDWARD H. CRANE
Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.

Professor Reich is correct in his assessment of the new puritanical right, and his reasons for its surging popularity are valid. The tragedy is that most of these new-rightists from the middle class are dupes of an unholy gang of hypocrites using the puritan ethic to propagandize sincere achievers into support for a terribly elitist and corrupt power structure based solely on wealth.

ROBERT MCPHEE
Denver, Colo.

Robert B. Reich replies:

These letters vividly illustrate the theme of my essay: Our dominant ideologies are inappropriate to the world economy we now inhabit.

At the one extreme we have Mr. Crane, who sees the choice as between an unfettered market, wonderfully reflecting the “spontaneous order of a free society,” and the dreaded specter of a centrally planned economy. Conveniently absent from Mr. Crane’s cartoon vision are the actual forces that are setting world trade on its particular course but that correspond precisely to neither alternative: military research, procurement, and sales; consortia of international banks and financial institutions; multinational corporations; and industry-led protectionism.

At the other extreme we find Professor Thayer, who asks us to choose between the deindustrialization of our economy and the cartelization of world markets. Absent from Professor Thayer’s cartoon vision is the possibility that American industry and workers could shift to higher-value-added production—from, say, making basic integrated steel to making high-strength, corrosion-resistant steel—thereby avoiding the Professor’s grim choice. Mr. McPhee simply places the blame for all our ills at the feet of wealthy elites.

These ideological tunnels lead nowhere. Instead, they impoverish political debate about our evolving place in the world economy. Mr. Crane’s magical marketplace is as fictional as Professor Thayer’s zero-sum game, as platitudinous as Mr. McPhee’s power structures. While their tiresome disagreement over the relative merits of markets and planning rambles on, America’s indifference to the practical effects of its policies is causing increasing strains in the world. Rather than embrace and ease the inevitable changes we face, we cling passionately to irrelevancies.

OPINIONS WILL VARY

I am astonished to read Anthony Burgess’s description of George Seldes as “a great American pressman,” who “has fought long for the freedom of the press” (“Super Thoughts,” April *Atlantic*).

Perhaps Mr. Burgess intended this encomium sarcastically. If he did not, then he is woefully unaware of Seldes’s quite astounding role as a “pressman.” Seldes will always be known in the annals of

American journalism as the man who, after violently attacking the Soviet government in the late 1920s and early 1930s, suddenly turned around and spent several years issuing *In Fact*, one of the most scurrilous sheets ever to abuse the susceptibilities of the American public. During the infamous Stalin-Hitler-pact period (1939–1941) Seldes’s periodical became the most widely read leftist publication in the country, and outdid all others in attacks on President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and other democratic opponents of the “twin-star” alliance of Moscow and Berlin. I would suggest that Mr. Burgess peruse William L. O’Neill’s excellent account of the period, *A Better World*, for an accurate description of Seldes’s efforts, which could more justifiably be described as activities *against* the freedom of the press, at least as regards the Russian press.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
Editor
Journal of Contemporary Studies
San Francisco, Calif.

“Perpetrating a sonnet, concocting an article. Language is a repertory of these suitable snubs. . . .” So says Jorge Luis Borges, in his “Art of Verbal Abuse.” Anthony Burgess uses this technique to snub George Seldes, calling him an expert “rifler.” That, however, is his Parthian shot. Well before he fires it, Mr. Burgess establishes that he dislikes collections of quotations. “If you haven’t read the book, don’t quote from it,” he admonishes.

Perhaps it is impossible to be erudite without being persnickety—and I am certainly no expert on the former quality—but I suspect Mr. Burgess would not like us to carry his advice too far. We would have to avoid uttering an epigram of Oscar Wilde’s, for example, unless we were quite sure we had read the work it was gleaned from, and we would have to ignore the fact that a Wilde epigram was designed to stand quite sturdily on its own. Carried *ad absurdum*, I could not use the phrase “Parthian shot” until I had read up on the battle techniques of a certain ancient breed of horsemen.

I ask Mr. Burgess for greater leniency in this matter of quotations, and not because we Americans have “no time to read” but because it is not always necessary to swallow the entire production of an author to appreciate a tidbit of it.

BRUCE C. KULA
Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.



His tour of duty was over. This was his final good-bye. He remembered all the good times, the joking and that special closeness that comes from sharing not only victory, but defeat.

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Anthony Burgess observes, "Women writers . . . lack a willingness, or an ability, to make their fiction move" ("A Pre-War Idyll," March *Atlantic*). This situation clearly stems from women's inclination to experience life passively, through their emotions, and from their desire to facilitate men's action and greatness rather than take action and achieve greatness themselves.

Women writers, being women first and writers second, do not know action through firsthand experience, and thus cannot write plots. Knowing this, we now can recognize that Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, Joyce Carol Oates, Marge Piercy, Harriet Arnow, and Toni Morrison are men.

MIRIAM HABER-PAYNE
Bloomington, Ind.

I am disgusted by Anthony Burgess's gender generalization in his review of Rebecca West's *This Real Night*. His distinctions between male and female writers are illegitimate and narrow-minded. His statements that female writers, by virtue of their sex, "have certain advantages over the male" because they have, "of course, concern with the deeper and more tender emotions" but that they "lack a willingness, or an ability, to make their fiction move" are ridiculous and unprofessional. Strengths and weaknesses within a work are due to the creative ability of the author, not to her/his gender.

STEPHANIE PASTERNAK
Amherst, Mass.

IMPOVERISHED ECONOMICS

Robert Kuttner does an admirable job of exposing the pretentiousness, fallacies, and frequent irrelevance of economic theory ("The Poverty of Economics," February *Atlantic*). There is one point I would add, though, which will put into even better perspective the disdain that George Stigler and other economists have expressed for the "inferior" social sciences: the so-called Nobel Prize for economics, which Stigler so admires, is in fact not a Nobel Prize at all and has nothing to do with the Nobel Foundation or the Nobel trust.

Alfred Nobel established awards in five fields—physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace—which were first awarded in 1901, five years after Nobel's death. The Nobel Memorial

Prize in Economic Science was founded by the Swedish National Bank, in 1968–1969, and is financed by the bank. Presumably, one of the reasons for the creation of this award was to assuage economists who were offended that Nobel had not considered "economic science" deserving of an award. The Nobel Memorial Prize is announced each year at the same time that the real Nobel Prizes are, to foster an illusion of authenticity. It is unfortunate indeed that many people are unaware that the award is no more than a prize established by economists for economists to enhance the status of their "science."

MARK KRAMER
Balliol College, Oxford

I have belatedly read Robert Kuttner's article in the February *Atlantic* and feel the need to correct some of the impressions that the article is bound to create.

Mr. Kuttner's criticism of mainstream economics rests on familiar themes: that the model of the perfectly competitive world is irrelevant, that mainstream economics is largely a formalistic exercise resting on scanty empirical evidence, that economists neither know nor care about the institutional arrangements of society, and so forth. The usual authors are cited: Leontief on the excessive amounts of nonempirical work, Morgestern on the inaccuracy of economic data, Leijonhufvud on the (presumably undeserved) prestige of mathematical economists, and Thurow, Hirschman, Bowles, and others.

Many of the criticisms of Mr. Kuttner and his cast of economists are well taken. Less empirical work is being done than some of us would like. Macroeconomics is in bad shape, and the recent history of the large macroeconomic models is nothing to brag about. In any econometric model used for forecasting, it may be difficult to predict the future values of the exogenous ("independent") variables. Even the most "institutions-sensitive" economist will tend to use institutional facts of life in his model in a schematic way, rather than in the full and rich detail that a historian would employ. Nor will I defend Feldstein's now famous debacle over Social Security or engage in "data mining"—that is, churn the same set of data until a preferred variant of model fits reasonably well.

But Mr. Kuttner is simply not familiar with the bulk of what economics today is

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about. The perfectly competitive model is *not* the mainstream today. It reached its formal high point in Debreu's *Theory of Value* (1959) and has represented a small and decreasing portion of economics since that time. To be sure, the elementary textbooks are regrettably way behind the times and, for reasons that are not entirely clear to me, still concentrate on the economics that represented the mainstream thirty to forty years ago. Mr. Kuttner flagellates economists for being bound by the equilibrium paradigm. Has he never heard of disequilibrium economics, of Barro and Grossman, of Malinvaud, and of the large quantity of econometric work on nonclearing markets? (Could he actually be unaware of *my* work?)

Mr. Kuttner castigates us for not paying enough attention to the dynamics of the firm. Has he never read Spence or Telser or innumerable papers in *The Bell Journal of Economics* (now *The Rand Journal*)? Why does he think that economists always take "perfect information by all" as a cornerstone? Does he not know the enormous and enlightening literature on adverse selection, moral hazard, the

principal-agent problem, and implicit contracting? Has he not read Grossman and Hart and Stiglitz and Holstrom and Azariadis and many, many others? Does he not know that the study of oligopoly and various forms of monopolistic competition outweighs the study of perfect competition by a huge margin? As far as empirical work is concerned, why does he not seem to attribute any importance to the large number of cross-sectional labor-market studies (simply too numerous to attempt to list) based on samples of many thousands of individuals in surveys, panel data sets, and so forth?

RICHARD E. QUANDT
Professor of Economics
Princeton University
Princeton, N.J.

Robert Kuttner replies:

I have indeed read many, though not all, of the economists Professor Quandt cites. To be sure, there is ample econometric work on nonclearing markets, on disequilibria, and even on economic institutions as social organisms.

But, as Quandt himself concedes, the core of economic theory that is taught in

the universities, and that informs far too much policy analysis, still clings to the paradigm of perfect competition and discounts exceptions to it as imperfections. The implicit, and often explicit, normative message that follows from the spurious positivism is that imperfection ought to be expunged.

Most of my criticisms only echo those that have been made by some of the most distinguished members of the economics fraternity. Far from being a picture thirty years out of date, these criticisms within the profession have lately intensified. Obviously I do not share Professor Quandt's view of the world. But I do read.

GREAT PUZZLERS

I read with interest the letters of Joseph ("World's Greatest Puzzler") D'Ulisse and John DeCuevas in the May *Atlantic*. Mr. D'Ulisse wrote that he had solved every *Atlantic* puzzle in ink. Mr. DeCuevas, who has also solved them all, wrote to praise the couple who construct them.

Like them, I have solved all the puz-

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zles, but I prefer to read once through the clues and then type the solutions while blindfolded.

KURT A. YOUNG
Orlando, Fla.

“Yes” is my response to Ronald Arledge’s question, Has anyone else solved all eighty-eight cryptic puzzles that have appeared in *The Atlantic*? However, his claim deserves the greater merit, since he is not, I feel sure, the grateful parent of one puzzler and a long-standing admirer of the other.

SHIRLEY COX
Bethlehem, Penn.

ADVICE & CONSENT

The letters in the April *Atlantic* responding to Nat Hentoff’s “The Awful Privacy of Baby Doe” (January) underline the profound emotional and ethical dilemmas to which Hentoff has drawn our attention. For every child that a sorrowful parent describes as having had a prolonged and agonizing death because of the intervention of right-to-

lifers, Hentoff counters with the illustration of a handicapped individual who attained a high quality of life because the parents ignored the physicians’ advice and dire predictions. On the other hand, how can we possibly calculate or compare the pain and agony added to the sum total of human suffering when the physicians’ dire predictions in fact come true?

I don’t believe that Dr. Shaw’s formula can be dismissed as simply a means test. Perhaps it is something even more odious, but if it is, that is not Dr. Shaw’s doing. In general, a means test is used to justify withholding community support if the applicant *has* the means to sustain himself (at some quite minimal standard). Dr. Shaw’s test is used to justify the withholding of medical assistance if the individual *does not have* the means to help himself (and no community assistance is anticipated). Drs. Venes and Huttenlocher, of the Yale University School of Medicine, are quoted by Hentoff as identifying “the real issues” to be “the obligation of an affluent society to provide financial support and the opportunity for a gainful life to its less fortunate citizens.”

Dr. Shaw’s formula makes clear, in effect, that this affluent society does not always meet this obligation.

The latest figures on the Medicare end-stage renal disease (ESRD) program, which took effect in July of 1973, show that life-sustaining services are now provided to 72,000 patients at an annual cost of \$2 billion. (I single this program out because I was involved in developing policies, regulations, administrative instructions, and the ESRD legislative amendments of 1978.) The government actuary’s estimate was an initial year’s cost of \$250 million and an eventual leveling off at about 50,000 patients. Even with the actuary’s grossly understated estimates, if the Medicare ESRD proposal were made in 1985 rather than in 1972, it would, beyond a shadow of a doubt, be rejected, and decisions as to who would get the costly services of an inadequate supply of artificial kidneys and trained personnel would continue to be made by physicians’ “God committees.”

MILTON N. CIKINS
Sandwich, Mass.

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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

NAPOLÉON ELEVATED

PICTURE Charles de Gaulle striding down the Champs Élysées on August 26, 1944: a majestic figure, towering over throngs of Parisians cheering their liberator. The scene is familiar. A world leader dominating, by height as much as by grandeur, the crowds gathered to honor his triumph.

Now picture Napoleon Bonaparte, the *"petit caporal,"* taking tiny steps through the villages and hamlets of southeastern France on his return from Elba, in 1815. Thousands of peasants shout, "Long live the Emperor!" We imagine them craning their necks and perching in trees to get a glimpse of their pint-sized savior.

These two celebrated scenes are separated by more than a century, their principal actors by more than a foot in height. But Napoleon—the scrawny Corsican who overcame his shortness (historians tell us) and grew into a colos-

sal leader, the model of the feisty little man, the hero of countless small persons with gigantic complexes — when placed shoulder to shoulder with much of the French population, was tall. Not symbolically tall, as in "tall in the saddle" or "a man of towering accomplishments," but physically, measurably, tall.

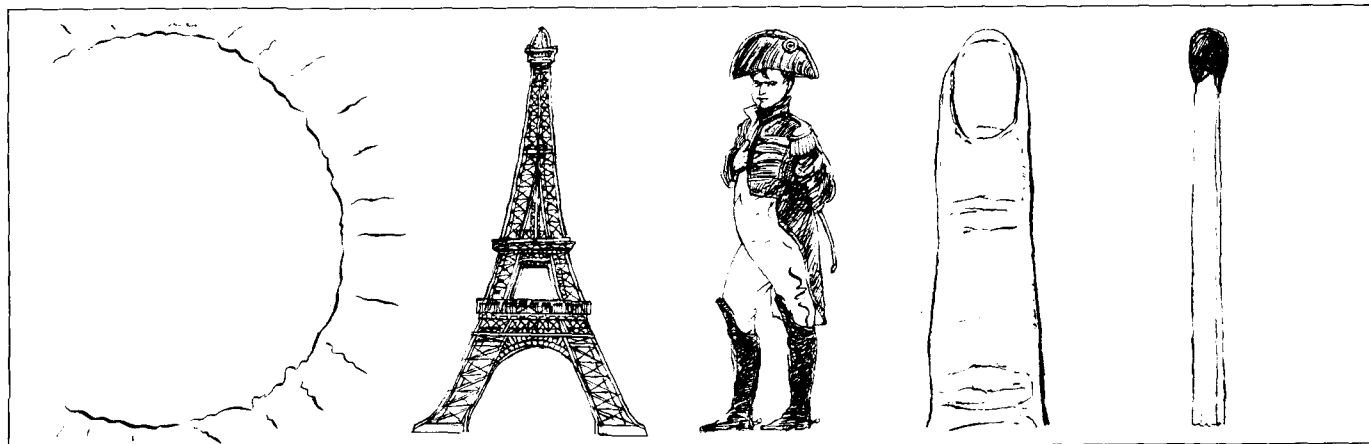
Estimates of Napoleon's height range from 5'2" to 5'6", the figure cited most often. One reason for the discrepancy stems from medical reports alleging that Napoleon shrank in the final days of his bout with intestinal cancer. When the deposed Emperor died, on May 5, 1821, he stood, or reclined, at approximately 5'2"—according to one account, a full two or three inches less than his former height.

Let's say, for the sake of compromise and comparison, that Napoleon, barefoot, and without the famous hat that made him seem "two feet taller," was 5'4". Scholars of rural France (and circa 1800 France was overwhelmingly rural) agree that huge numbers of conscripts were rejected by the army for shortness. Hordes of aspiring soldiers standing 4'11" just missed the requirement. "Men remarkable by their height," says one historian, that is, men who tow-

ered over their weedy comrades, measured around 5'6". Contemporaries described Robespierre, whom Napoleon followed at the helm of the Revolution, to be "of middle height," "five foot two or three inches tall." And Robespierre hailed from the relatively robust north of France. Evidence from the south, including Corsica, Napoleon's birthplace, attests to legions of far shorter provincials.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim found that northerners generally grew taller and killed themselves more often than inhabitants of southern France, though the two tendencies—tallness and suicide—need not be directly related. Whatever the case, one and two centuries ago 5'2" was an admirable height in many parts of France, 5'4" was inching toward physical hegemony, and 5'6" made one a candidate for a nosebleed in Gascony, Provence, and Corsica.

If, compared with *le peuple*, Napoleon was tall, how did the myth of his shortness develop and why has it persisted? Although scholars of the past strive for objectivity, they cannot shed one biological determinant: century after century, the writing of history has been the domain of those who are urban, educat-



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Gabriel Cortez
Colombia
Age 4

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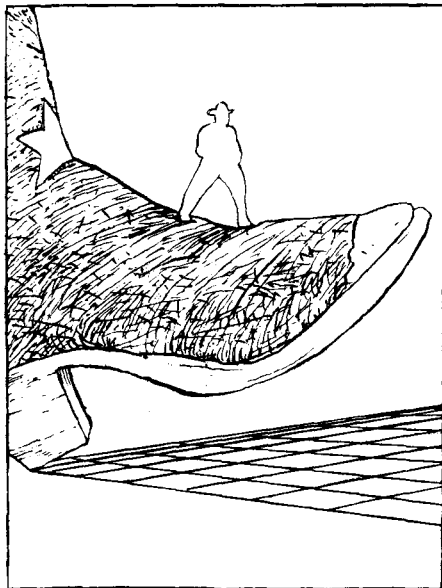
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ed, and relatively healthy, which is to say those who are taller than most.

Had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, Pascal once noted, "the whole face of the world would have been changed." Had French historians been closer in all ways to *le peuple*, had they come from Ajaccio, Corsica, and not from Paris, France, the Napoleonic legacy would be different and the Western world might be saddled with one less complex.

—Michael Burns

Michael Burns teaches history at Mount Holyoke College. A version of this essay will appear in For Want of a Horse: Choice and Chance in History, to be published later this month by Stephen Greene Press.



HOUSTON

A PERMANENT BOOMTOWN

The secret of Houston's success lies in the resourcefulness of its citizens and its lack of class or caste barriers

CONSIDERING THE circumstances of its rise, Houston's decline must have been deeply gratifying to many people. Through the 1970s, as the rest of the country struggled to cope with rising oil prices, Houston grew proud and fat. While the auto industry fell apart, while people poured out of Cleveland and Detroit, Houston seemed to profit from their misery. In 1970 two million people lived in the Houston area; in

1980 there were three million, making it by far the fastest-growing big city in the country. Buildings sprang up everywhere, and Houston became the favored showplace of the world's great architects. Because of the absence of zoning, new skyscrapers could turn up anywhere—a sixty-four-story building called the Transco Tower became renowned in Houston as the "nation's tallest building not in a central business district," an honor akin to "longest punt not on a football field." From 1971 to 1981 there was more construction in Houston than in any other American city—even Los Angeles, which contained twice as many people and was hardly in decline. Businessmen did their commuting in helicopters; the real-estate market made Everyman a potential millionaire; it was the time of boom.

In Houston the 1970s had all the markings of a speculative bonanza, driven by blind-luck profits from oil and land. Was petroleum inherently more valuable at the end of the decade than at the beginning? Perhaps by a little, but not by any factor resembling the 1,000 percent increase in real oil prices that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries had engineered. At the beginning of the decade a barrel of oil sold for less than \$2; by the end the price had gone over \$40. For Houston, as for Anchorage and Riyadh, this seemed to be all to the good. There was more money to be spent on offshore rigs, condominiums, and everything else the city made. Observers from the rest of the country could be forgiven for concluding that Houston was dancing on America's grave. In the mid-seventies a northern journalist wrote a celebrated book depicting the emerging "Southern Rim" as a land of greed, rootlessness, and crypto-fascist tendencies. He declared Houston its natural capital, intending no compliment.

Many Houstonians returned the favor, unable to conceal their belief that their prosperity was a standing rebuke to the floundering Flints and Youngtowns of the world. In 1982, in the last of the heady days for Houston, I listened to a prominent local newspaperman describe one puzzling trait of the "black-platers" who kept rolling into town, their automobiles bearing that dark badge of failure the Michigan license plate. You'd figure they'd want to trade them in for Texas plates as soon as possible, he said. Why are they so slow to get with the program? A few months earlier, when pre-

paring for my family's move to Texas, I had learned at the U-Haul office that there would be a \$300 drop-off charge. Everyone was going to Texas and no one was coming back.

A year later, when we came back east, we had to pay another drop-off charge. By then the flow was moving the other way. In the second half of 1982 the Houston district of U-Haul sent three times as many trucks and twice as many trailers to the Chicago-Detroit district as it received. People stopped coming to Houston because oil had stopped meaning instant wealth.

The clearest indicator of the change was the Hughes Tool Company's "rig count," an index watched as closely in Houston as poll results are in political campaigns. The rig count tells how many rotary rigs are actively drilling for oil or gas in the United States. It rises and falls with the more fundamental index—the price of a barrel of oil—and by implication it indicates everything that matters about the industry's health: how many roughnecks will be hired, how much drilling mud will be sold, how much petroleum will be refined. In the bad old days, before OPEC, the rig count had drifted from 2,000 in the early 1960s to just below 1,000 in the early 1970s, as American fields were drained of the oil worth exploiting at \$2 a barrel. It started heading up again after OPEC became a serious force in 1972; reached 2,000 in 1977, as Jimmy Carter pleaded for more domestic drilling; passed 3,000 in 1980, when the Iranians priced their oil out of the world market and panic buying drove the spot-market price to new highs daily; and reached its giddy peak near the end of 1981, when it stood at 4,530.

Then came the horrifying period that many Houstonians now refer to as the "free fall." With oil at \$40 a barrel, producers around the world tried to cash in by expanding production, just as consumers were drastically cutting back. Soon there were the makings of today's oil glut. By the end of 1982 the rig count was below 3,000, and through 1983 it gained speed in its descent. By the late summer it had crashed through 2,000 and was still headed down. The crews who had worked on those 2,500 now-idle rigs were laid off. The companies that built, sold, and serviced oil-field equipment went broke. The house of cards fell in.

The dentists and insurance men who had taken a flyer on condos or oil leases

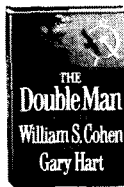
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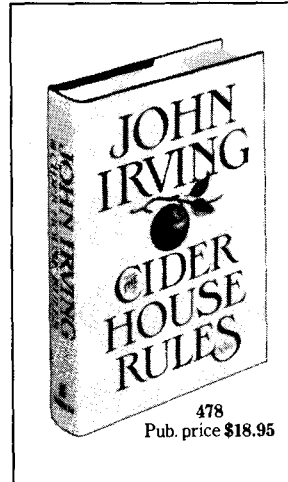
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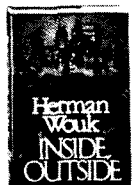
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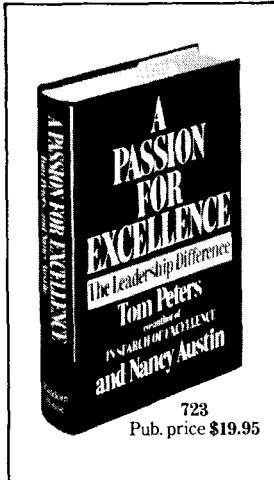
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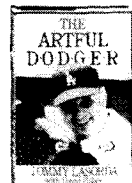
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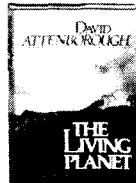
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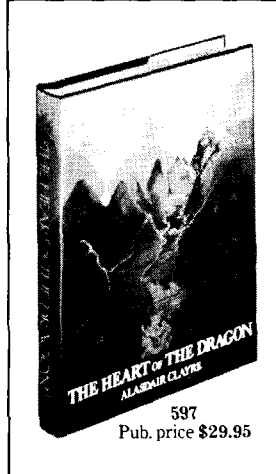
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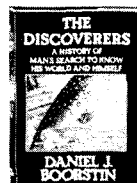
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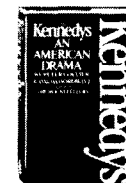
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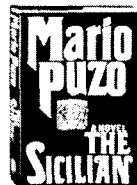
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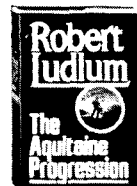
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were suddenly pleading their way out of bankruptcy court, alongside grizzled oilmen who had made profits through thirty years of low prices but had gone heavily into debt to buy new equipment when it seemed the boom would never end. Houston's construction could not be turned off instantly, but the flow of new building permits stopped abruptly.

In June of 1983, during a severe recession, the unemployment rate for the nation as a whole was 10.2 percent. In Houston—where unemployment had averaged 4 percent during the post-OPEC years, where the monthly rate had dipped as low as 2.6 percent, where there was supposed to be work for everyone with strong arms and the right attitude—the rate was 10.2 percent. Three months later, when the national rate edged downward and Houston's didn't, the city's unemployment rate was for the only time in its history higher than the national average. In 1983 Houston lost nearly 100,000 jobs, and for the first time since the Depression the number of employed people shrank.

Ever since then Houston's troubles have been amply, even lovingly, covered in the national news. The commercial real estate that was thrown up with such bravado now seems to represent grotesque excess. *The New York Times* and CBS News have pointed out that Houston has more unoccupied office space than Denver—or San Francisco—has total space. Personal and corporate bankruptcies are up; restaurant and hotel prices are down. Last fall several prominent business figures put together a campaign to do what would previously have seemed redundant: advertise Houston's virtues in hopes of attracting new business and investment.

In short, the common view is that Houston got what was coming to it—as Saudi Arabia might, if it didn't have quite so much oil. With this image in mind, it comes as a shock to visit Houston and see how little it resembles any of the truly troubled manufacturing-belt cities whose factories are closing and whose people are moving away. In fact, the most remarkable and under-reported aspect of Houston's economy is not how far it fell but how quickly it has come back.

ANDREW RUDNICK, AN economist with the Houston Economic Development Council—a Chamber of Commerce offshoot now trying to spread the good news about the city—says, “My

premise is that the eighteen-month decline in the Houston economy was from here [hands over head] to here [six inches down], whereas Detroit's was from here [knees] to here [ankles]. It was only a decline in the rate of growth. It happened quickly and was modest, compared to the long-time decline in the upper Midwest. Unless the oil market drops dramatically, we will come out of this with a healthier economy.”

There are exceptions to Houston's general recovery: it will be a long time before prudent investors will want to put up another office building or try for a quick killing selling condos to rich Mexicans. The freeways are lined with mobile-home sales lots, and roughly one trailer in two bears a banner announcing “REPO” in big letters. Each repossession obviously means bad news for a family and, less directly, for merchants, banks, and the rest of the economic food chain. But by most of the measures of an area's economic health—its ability to produce goods, create jobs, and distribute wealth—Houston is not doing badly at all. Even in 1985, when the auto industry is up and oil is down, blue-collar workers especially would find their prospects better in Houston than in Detroit.

Houston's unemployment rate, which was 8.0 percent at the beginning of 1984, was down to 6.3 percent by June, one point lower than the national average. By the end of the year it was 5.9 percent. The area's population never stopped growing, nor did retail sales or manufacturers' shipments. The Houston Help Wanted Index, which measures ads in the local papers (and is compared with a base level of 100 in 1967), had soared to 400 in the glory days and then fallen to the low 200s in 1983. It was up to almost 300 late last year. The only measures that were not really improving were those involving construction and real estate. Meanwhile, in Detroit the unemployment rate was 12.7 percent. That is, at a time when the auto industry was booming, when its companies were enjoying the brief summer of protection from Japanese imports and were making more cars and money than they had in years, Detroit's unemployment rate was still worse than Houston's has ever been, even at the depths of the oil bust. Which city, again, was supposed to be “recovering”?

Why didn't the collapse of the oil market kill Houston? Why did the city rebound so fast? There is a Chamber of

Commerce answer to the question, which stresses the city's estimable "diversity," a trait little emphasized before 1982.

Through most of its 150-year history Houston had not exactly been a shrine to racial or economic diversity. In the 1960s and 1970s the city government appeared to be run as a subsidiary of the Chamber of Commerce (when one mayor, Louie Welch, left office to become head of the Chamber, the move was widely viewed as a promotion), and the police force was chronically embroiled in lawsuits over and federal investigations into its treatment of the city's black and Mexican American citizens. The big change started in 1981, when Kathy Whitmire, a technocratic city administrator, was elected mayor of a city where the big deals had always been handled by big men. The racial climate began to moderate with the arrival of Lee Brown, who was recruited from Atlanta and became Houston's first black police chief in 1982. Coincident with these signs of social progress was the spreading awareness that the city might have to look beyond the deal-makers and oil wells on which its economy had traditionally relied.

Even during the boom Houston was never quite as dependent on oil as Detroit has been on automobiles. Exact figures are hard to obtain, but somewhere between a third and a fourth of Houston's "gross regional product" is estimated to have come from the energy business, while at least half of Detroit's has come from automobiles. The companies hardest hit by the decline were not those that sold oil but those that sold to the oil industry. Local manufacturers supplied drilling bits, offshore rigs, geophysical expertise, and hundreds of other products and services to energy producers around the world. The rule of thumb was that each rig operating anywhere in the world meant forty-five jobs in Houston, an equation whose effects seemed much less attractive when the rig count was going down than when it was going up. "When the market softens, the oil companies can cut back on operations, but you've always got *some* oil flowing," says M. A. Wright, who was chairman of Exxon USA during the boom of the 1970s. Wright is now the chairman of Cameron Iron Works, a local firm that has historically specialized in oil-field equipment and that has laid off nearly 60 percent of its work force in the past three years. He says, "The suppliers are

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the ones who are really hit. When rotary rigs aren't turning, Hughes isn't selling any bits and we aren't selling any blow-out preventers. We had a five-year backlog of orders that disappeared in six months."

THE HOUSTON Economic Development Council claims that Houston's future economic growth will come from three sources that have almost nothing to do with oil.

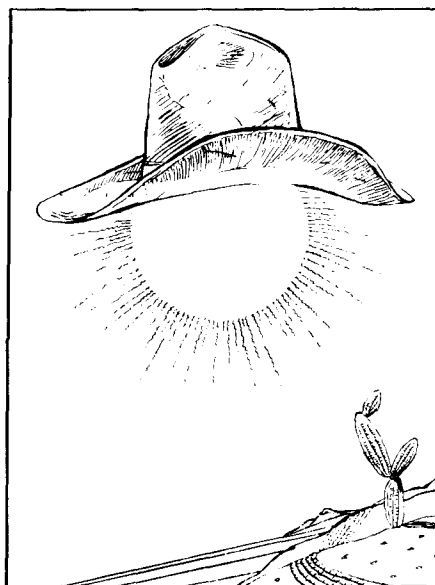
One is the Texas Medical Center, a dense concentration of hospitals and research institutions that has long been a source of civic pride and that already employs some 50,000 people. Another is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, twenty-five miles southeast of downtown Houston. The third is the Houston Ship Channel, which connects Houston with the Gulf of Mexico and has made the city into a major port, handling more than half the nation's agricultural exports.

From the official Houston point of view, what these three enterprises have in common is their potential as staging areas for privately financed economic growth. From discoveries at the medical center will come commercial spin-offs that could eventually prove as important as the electronic products spawned in the labs of Stanford and MIT ("They have the technology, but they just haven't been commercializing it," M. A. Wright says sorrowfully. "Doctors used to come here for a year's training, and when they got back home they'd want to order the same drugs or equipment they'd used in Houston. The medical center would have to tell them it wasn't on the market.") The NASA installation makes Houston a logical center for whatever industries eventually emerge to manufacture products in space or make supplies for space travel. The ship channel has already proved its worth as a cradle of manufacture. Its construction, at the turn of the century, created a demand for the local production of cement, iron, and related goods, and today its banks are lined with refineries and chemical plants.

There is, of course, another similarity among these three pillars of economic diversity, which is that each of them is the product of governmental, rather than purely business, initiative. NASA is the clearest example: whatever industries it eventually creates will exist only because the federal government invest-

ed in manned space flights, and they will exist in Houston only because the state's politicians, from Lyndon Johnson to Albert Thomas, the Houston congressman who was the chairman of the appropriations committee that controlled the space agency's funding, muscled the installation into Texas in the early 1960s.

The ship channel also represents a public investment in what would today be called infrastructure. Almost as soon as Houston was founded, in 1836, local businessmen dreamed of dredging the shallow Buffalo Bayou so as to open a navigable route to the sea. But the channel did not come into being until the U.S. Congress gave in to the entreaties



of two of Albert Thomas's predecessors in the House, Joseph C. Hutcheson and Thomas H. Ball, and agreed to pay for the dredging.

As for the medical center, several of its hospitals were started by private philanthropy, but its dramatic postwar expansion reflects the new public subsidy of medical research, medical training, and medical care. Dr. Michael DeBakey, who along with Dr. Denton Cooley is one of the medical center's two resident superstars, became almost as notable for attracting government funding as for performing vascular surgery. The state of Texas subsidizes students at Baylor College of Medicine, DeBakey's base at the medical center, even though it is a private school.

Houston's buccaneer capitalists regard as at most a mild irony the fact that their emerging industries have been fostered by the state. "I've got nothing

against using the government to help achieve a private-enterprise goal," Jack Rains, an executive of an architecture and engineering firm called 3D/International, says. Certainly Rains and his colleagues do not perceive Houston's experience as an argument for industrial planning, in the sense of public investment in facilities that industry can use in unexpected ways.

They do concede that Houston's recovery has been made easier by another pro-planning, anti-invisible-hand approach. Like many big cities of the Rust Belt, Houston has recently endured major factory shutdowns. In October of 1983, for instance, Armco Steel announced that it would close its Houston works, which had employed 4,000 workers at its peak and still had 2,000 employees at shutdown time. The mill had suffered from foreign competition but was finished off by the oil bust, which took away the market for the high-quality plate steel it had supplied to drilling platforms.

In many midwestern cities companies have concealed their difficulties until the moment came to surprise workers with layoff notices. Armco's management engaged union members in an effort to save the mill as soon as the troubles began. "There was an extremely intense effort to share every bit of information about the problems, the probabilities, and the opportunities," Terry Hudson, a former Armco official, explained to me. "The company's books were open to everyone. We tried to break the complex accounting jargon down into clearer terms. We got the total involvement of everyone, and we would have saved the mill—we'd made it much more efficient—but we ran out of time."

When the mill finally closed, Hudson oversaw a retraining and job-placement effort that, according to all accounts, was phenomenally successful. A year after the shutdown he could say, "There has not been one lawsuit and not one grievance filed. I can honestly tell you that there is no animosity against the company. We came up with a prototype program for helping dislocated workers, and it ended up being a marvelous way to get hourly employees into other work." I was skeptical until I talked to some of the former Armco workers and the United Steelworkers district director, who agreed that the company had tried hard and that nearly everyone had found work.

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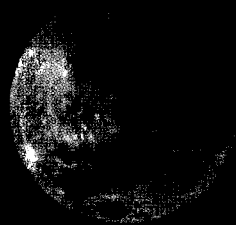
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EVEN IF MEDICINE, space, and shipping provide Houston with the perfectly diversified economy for the 1990s, even if the ex-Armco workers are better off than their northern counterparts laid off by U.S. Steel, there is something unsatisfactory about the notion that either business-labor cooperation or the future growth sectors account for Houston's recent rebound. After all, there was no sudden surge in medical or space employment to explain the drop in the unemployment rate. I was more impressed during my visit by a line of reasoning that came spontaneously from many Houstonians once they got past the standard Chamber of Commerce argument. It dwelt on one of Houston's traits—more distinctive than the space center, more even than the suburban skyscrapers—that helps explain its air of chaos as well as its capacity for growth.

Jack Rains, of 3D/International, is both an exponent of and a piece of evidence for this hypothesis. A fleshy man in his mid-forties, Rains is a Texas A&M graduate who practices the folksy-anecdote, barnyard-language style of business operation that comes as second nature in Houston. He flatly dismisses any comparison of Houston's difficulties with Chicago's or Detroit's.

"Those are *old* places. This is a new place. Houston is incomplete. It's like an adolescent who is still a little gawky but has great potential. The people who say we've got problems are the same ones who look at a snapshot and tell you where a train is headed."

With the boosterism boiled out, Rains's argument is that Houston will overcome its energy problems—indeed, has largely done so already—because it is so adaptable a society, can change so fast. It exists outside the world of zero-sum economics, where whatever I gain you lose, because its people are accustomed to thinking of new possibilities instead of competing for existing markets or jobs. The city's ability to adapt and respond, in turn, is linked to the very qualities that most unnerve outsiders: the chaos and lack of control that typify everything from its no-zoning ideology to the absence of a clear ruling class.

When Houstonians want to illustrate this point, they often contrast their city not with New York or Boston but with its in-state opposite, Dallas—controlled where Houston is loose and random, prim where Houston is crass and raw. "Houston was always the kind of place where you could walk in with a good

business plan and walk out with \$50,000," Lance Tarrance, a prominent Republican pollster, says. "In Dallas, where I grew up, they wanted to know about your mother and father and probably your blood type. In Dallas there are five country clubs, and you sign up when you're born. You get into the right one and you're set for life. In Houston they just create new ones." Tarrance's business surroundings epitomize the Houston he describes. His office is in a new high-rise called Tarrance Plaza, located on FM (Farm-to-Market) 1960, which has been converted within the past fifteen years from a small two-laner through the piney woods to a jumble of office buildings and K-Marts.

"There is a sense that the natural resources are down here, that we're like Chicago a hundred years ago," Tarrance says. "People have the sense that things are still moving our way. There's a psychological feeling of room to move around in—not just land but space to make your own way."

B. W. Moore is the chairman of Moorco, a holding company he put together two years ago when another Houston company, imperiled by the oil bust, needed to sell its assets and raise capital fast. Moore is a tidy, academic-looking man who appears to be dressed for success in Boston rather than Houston. One of Moorco's subsidiaries is a manufacturing plant in Erie, Pennsylvania; another is in Wrentham, Massachusetts. When I interviewed him, Moore spoke respectfully of the work ethic and the ethnic ties in those areas, but he said that only in Houston could he have gotten his company off the ground.

"There is *no controlling group* in Houston—not private, and not governmental. That is the most important fact about the place. Because no one is in control here, you can generally work out a way to get things done. When I was back in Pittsburgh, the business community was so tight that if you weren't a member of the Duquesne Club, it was very hard to get anything done. To put together the people to take the original risk with this company, I had to come here. It wouldn't have been possible in the more settled areas of the country. [A major Pittsburgh bank] has come into the deal, but back in Pittsburgh I couldn't have gotten their attention."

Houston's venture capitalists are the people most likely to talk about the "frontier spirit" and "wide-open possibilities," but many of its other citizens

behave as if they, too, believe that their choices are not constrained by the jobs they happen to hold or the identities they have previously been given. The most striking evidence is the anomaly of Houston's employment figures. Of the 100,000 jobs that disappeared in 1983, only about 30,000 had been restored by the end of 1984. In most places the obvious result would be 70,000 additional people unemployed. Yet Houston's unemployment rate dropped steadily—and much more rapidly than the lost jobs were restored. How could this be?

Mass migration could not be the answer, because the city's population and its work force have continued to grow. Only the most recently arrived of the "black-platers" are thought to have gone back north in 1983. The explanation, according to the Texas Employment Commission, rests on a factor that rarely enters the calculations when most cities discuss lost jobs: a boom in self-employment.

The references to "jobs" in Houston's employment figures include only "wage and salary employment"—that is, jobs on someone else's payroll. They exclude self-employment, the category which in Houston has enjoyed the most substantial recent growth. People have set up repair shops and small stores. I talked to an oil-field worker who has opened an income-tax service and to an ex-Armco employee who repairs cars from his home garage. Most of these people would be making more money if the steel mill were still open or the derrick were still running—but for now those jobs don't exist. They seem to think they are better off than if they were unemployed, and they take it for granted that their choices are not limited to the jobs listed in the paper.

A society of entrepreneurs and free-booting recent arrivals from someplace else, a city committed to an absence of central control and to the doctrine of every man for himself, is not always a pretty or comfortable place to be. Houston now proves that point—as Chicago did a hundred years ago, and as the fastest-growing regions of the United States always have. Houston is, and is proud of being, a place where people come to make money. Other cities would also like to make money, without the attendant turmoil. It is more comfortable to have an established social order, traditional neighborhoods, regnant good taste. But can the aesthetic failings and the rootlessness of a place like Houston

Technology's Human Face

Young men and women now planning and starting careers are faced with an environment of unparalleled change. The tiny device we call the integrated circuit—or electronic microchip—is bringing explosive changes to business and industry.

The chip is at the heart of countless new products entering the marketplace. It is radically altering manufacturing. It is yielding new ways to manage and transmit information. It is transforming the way companies operate.

Computer-aided design and manufacture, robotics, and telecommunications innovations—all made possible by microelectronics—are bringing about a new industrial revolution that will be just as significant as the first industrial revolution of two centuries ago.

How will people and technology co-exist in this rapidly changing business environment? Will technology diminish the importance of human brains and talent in the workplace? Will computers and robots hurt the chances of finding work that's satisfying and rewarding? Such concerns are unfounded. Bright, enthusiastic, and well educated young people will be more valuable than ever

as technology grows in importance.

Technology sounds impersonal, but it really begins with people. Technology is an expression of human resources. It springs from people's creativity, originality, innovation, and vision. These are the same attributes that create the entrepreneurial spirit vital to business success.

Technology is created by talented, motivated people working under conditions that allow them to achieve their full potential. Technology is advanced by people with ideas—people who can nurture those ideas and take risks to put them into effect.

Technology requires people who can think and understand. Scientists are developing computers with "artificial intelligence." But that's really a contradiction in terms. Only human beings possess true intelligence. Only people can turn knowledge into thoughts, thoughts into actions, and actions into results.

Technology is generating change—but people are generating technology. The human attributes that have brought about all the great accomplishments of the past will remain essential to business as technology advances, enabling people to do more things in better ways.



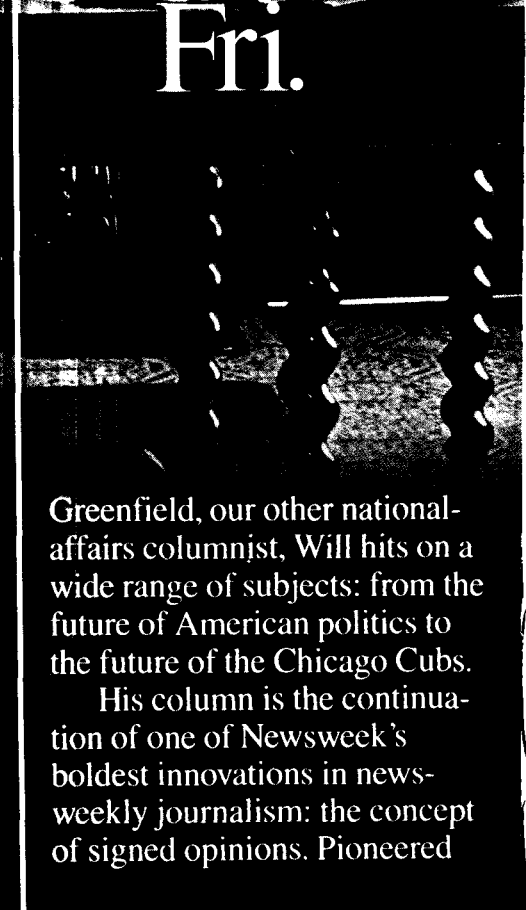


Mon.



Tue.

Thur.



Fri.

The week Newsweek readers began firing at Will.

The week was January 12th, 1976. The subject: "Knut Rockne for President."

It was George Will's first column for Newsweek. And as he compared the histrionics of a pregame speech to the hysteria of pre-election politics, a new generation of readers was born. Readers who have a pecu-

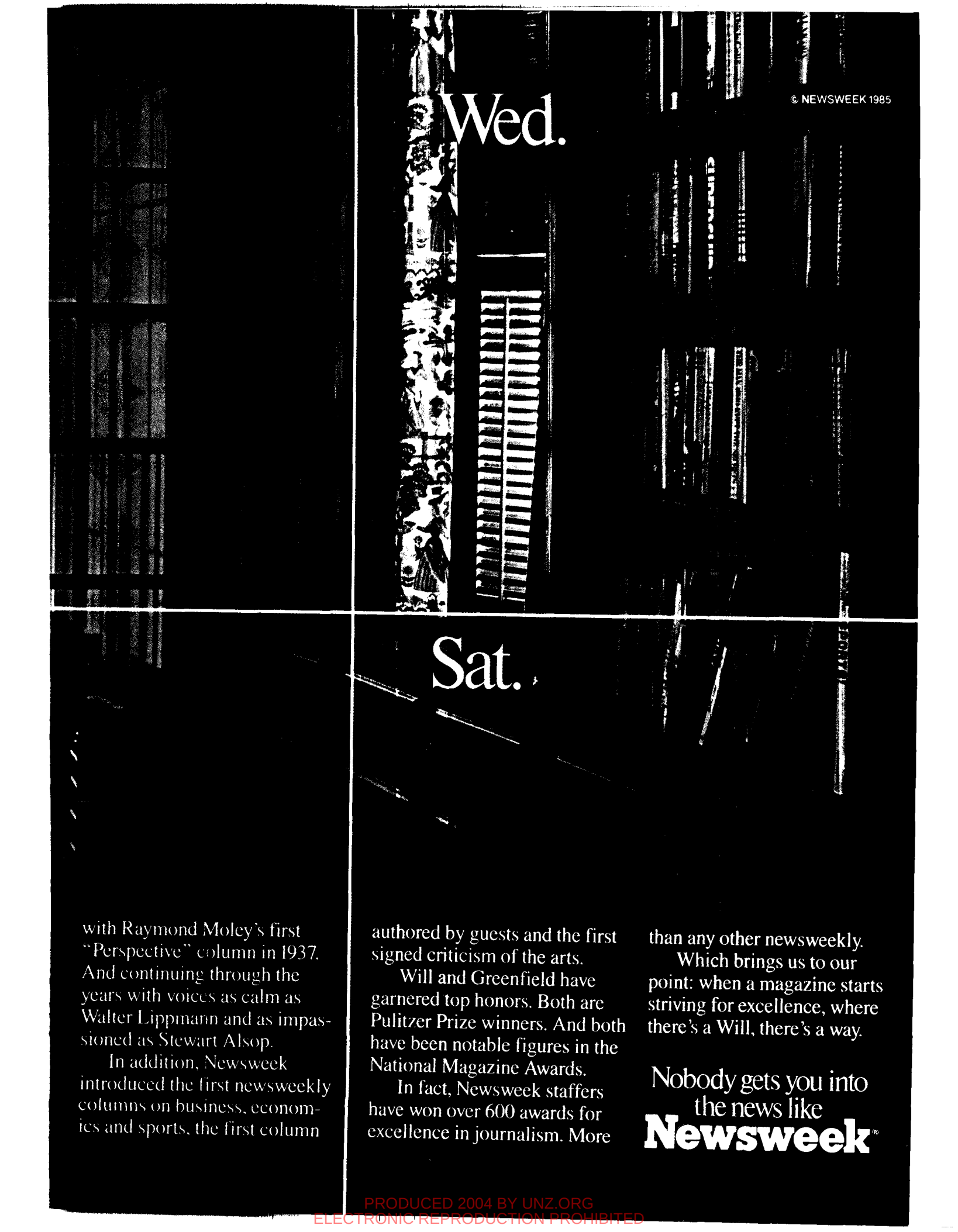
liar habit of reading our magazine backward. (From the back page, where George's column appears, forward.)

His witty, erudite style has earned him the respect and loyalty of a large (but split) audience: those who love him, as well as those who love to hate him.

Alternating with Meg

Greenfield, our other national-affairs columnist, Will hits on a wide range of subjects: from the future of American politics to the future of the Chicago Cubs.

His column is the continuation of one of Newsweek's boldest innovations in news-weekly journalism: the concept of signed opinions. Pioneered



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Sat.

with Raymond Moley's first "Perspective" column in 1937. And continuing through the years with voices as calm as Walter Lippmann and as impassioned as Stewart Alsop.

In addition, Newsweek introduced the first newsweekly columns on business, economics and sports, the first column

authored by guests and the first signed criticism of the arts.

Will and Greenfield have garnered top honors. Both are Pulitzer Prize winners. And both have been notable figures in the National Magazine Awards.

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Which brings us to our point: when a magazine starts striving for excellence, where there's a Will, there's a way.

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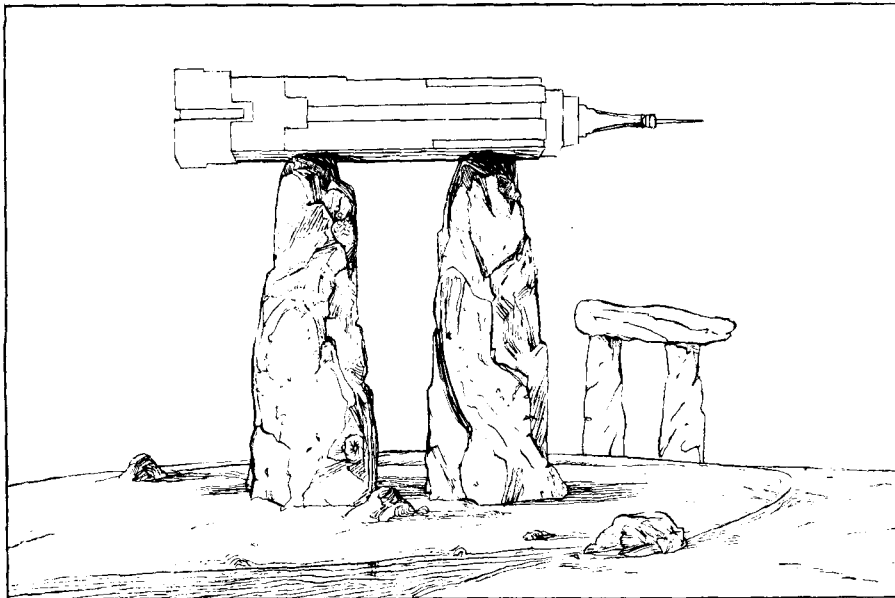
be separated from the resilience and sense of possibility that have put so many of its people back to work?

It's hard to think of evidence that the combination is possible—that life can be both orderly and adjustable, both secure and new. Perhaps the Japanese offer evidence. Nothing is more confounding, from the Western point of view, than their ability to maintain a tidily cohesive domestic society while being all too agile and adaptable in international competition. They seem more like a tribe, a family-state, than anything we can recognize as a pluralistic society. Life might be easier for us if we could imitate them, but we can't, we're different.

Americans have defined themselves by their willingness to meld many races and ethnic groups (the Japanese are famed for their xenophobia, even toward other Asians), and through history Americans have always been lighting out for the territories, looking for elbow room and a chance to start over again. That is why Mark Twain is an American writer and Henry James really isn't; it is why a place like Houston shows us something elemental about the American soul, leaving us at once appalled and inspired.

—James Fallow

James Fallow is the Washington editor of The Atlantic.



ARCHITECTURE

A FUTURE THAT LOOKS LIKE THE PAST

Planners in downtown San Francisco and at Battery Park City, in New York, are trying to design new buildings that look like they belong next to old ones

WE ARE BUILDING a new past in America's cities. After decades of what Walt Whitman called the "pull-down-and-build-over-again spirit of America," old buildings and neighborhoods are now being viewed not as tomorrow's construction sites but as sources of authority for the design of the

new. We used to try to make old buildings look new; now architects try to make new buildings, even giant new corporate headquarters, look old. And whereas people once believed in change, they now assume that anything new will be worse.

But even if we place velvet ropes around all our historic buildings and districts, there will still be new buildings and they will be built next to the old ones, posing the complex and controversial question of how to build the new in the context of the old.

During the past generation Modernism provided American cities with a solution to this problem. The antiquated, inefficient urban fabric had to be made orderly and functional, and the way to do that was to wipe it out, start clean, and build unornamented, monumental towers sited as objects on a grid of green or concrete. During the sixties almost

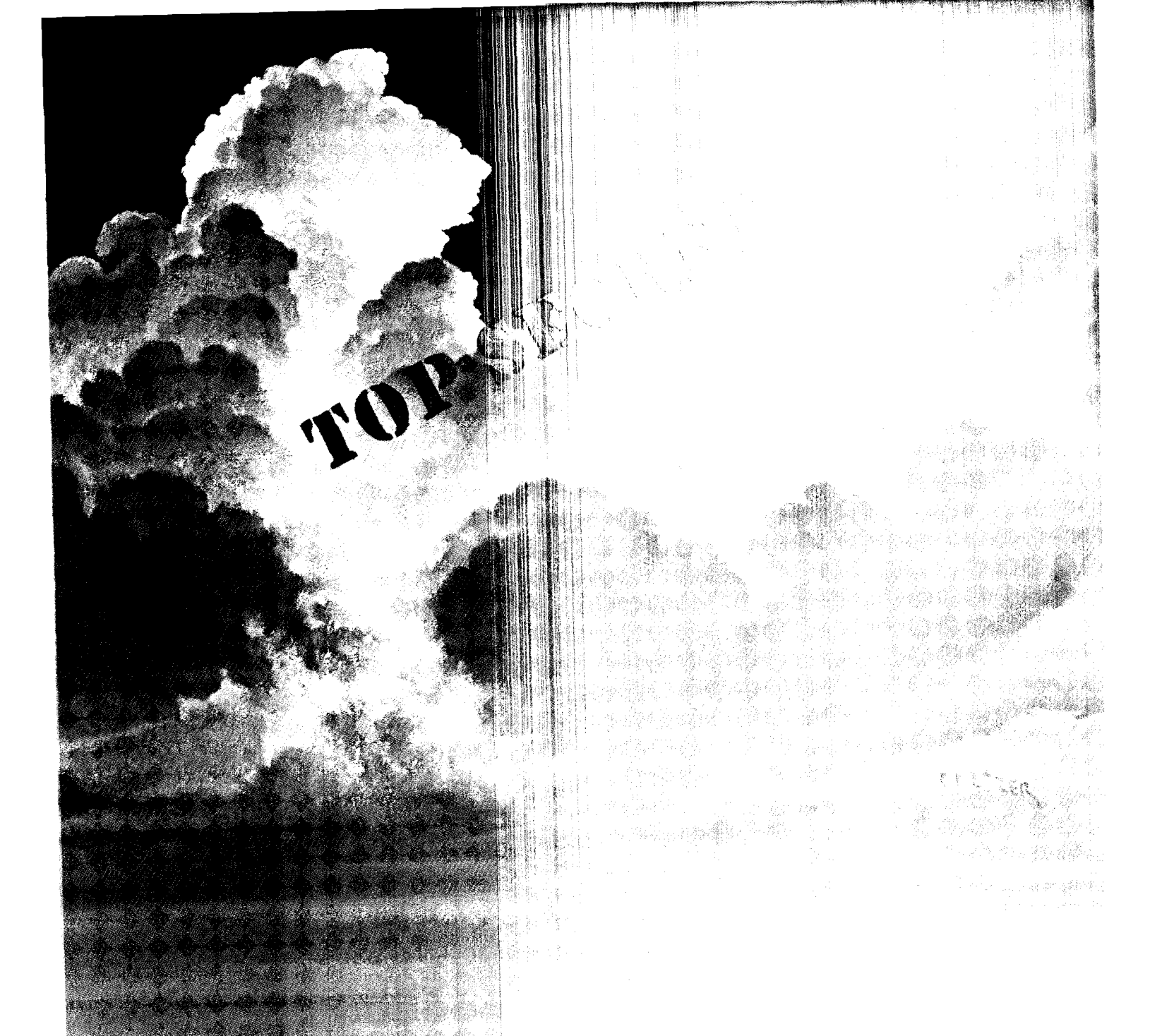
every major downtown in the United States was transformed into rows of glass, steel, and concrete boxes, often set back from the street, behind plazas. The diversity and intimate scale that constitute the very tissue of urban life were destroyed. The Modern movement was designing out of our cities the critical elements of "cityness"—streets, squares, and buildings with memorable façades—that distinguish the richness of urban life from the bleakness of a mute, freestanding office block.

Today Modernism has ceased to be the dominant urban design theory shaping our cities, but no single approach has yet emerged to take its place. While a theoretical debate rages over what architectural style to give new buildings—Contextualism, Rationalism, Post-Modernism, New Modernism—solutions are taking form on the ground. Two of the most important and influential are in New York and San Francisco.

Gradually taking shape on ninety-two acres of landfill in Lower Manhattan is Battery Park City, a \$4 billion residential and commercial complex going up on one of the largest single downtown parcels ever assembled. It is a deliberate rejection of Modernist urban design as well as of Modernist architecture.

The ambitious master plan and design guidelines, prepared in 1979 by the architecture and planning firm of Cooper/Eckstut Associates, set out to compensate for the failures of Modernism. Several earlier, rejected attempts to plan for the area were based on the Modernist conceptions of urban space that had produced such large-scale self-contained developments as Detroit's Renaissance Center and Boston's Prudential Center. Those projects broke the weave of the city to site giant towers in an open plaza—a version of Le Corbusier's towers in the park. The plan for Battery Park City seeks to establish a coherent and respectful relationship with the existing urban context. It calls for a traditional New York City system of streets, blocks, and public open spaces—the connective threads of urban life that Modernism rejected—to be knitted into Lower Manhattan. The plan states that "variety is purposely sought to avoid any appearance of a 'project' look or super blocks," and its main design principle is that "the public spaces of the streets and parks are the emphasis of the design work. . . . The buildings are the background."

The street is central to the plan's definition of public space. It is not just a



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traffic conduit, laid out along the straight line of an industrial metaphor, as in Modernist planning, but is the location of a variety of exchanges, experiences, and sensations. In the plan public space is not limited to streets, parks, and esplanades, though these receive particularly close attention, but includes the street wall and the façades of buildings—ornamentation, materials, fenestration, and cornice lines—as well as the shape of the skyline. The rooftops and the upper floors should be “consciously designed to create a special and interesting effect . . . consistent with the current skyline of Lower Manhattan.”

The plan treats the city as a repository of lessons from its past. In the words of the Battery Park City Authority, the designs of the project “reflect the judgement that few examples of post-war development can match the city’s older, more established neighborhoods in stability, diversity and architectural character.” They are a conscious rejection of the urban-renewal approach to city planning.

The buildings are in a style—or spirit—we have come to call Post-Modern. The term was introduced to mark the departure of architecture from Modernism without specifying its destination. Post-Modern buildings are thoroughly up-to-date in structural materials and concept but draw heavily on historical styles for their façades. Architects rummage through the past for historical idioms, replacing the Modern movement’s language of curtain walls, I-beams, and flat roofs with a language of entablatures, columns, and pitched roofs. Unlike the historicism of the nineteenth century, when buildings were executed in styles felt to be appropriate to their functions (universities were Gothic, government buildings Greco-Roman, country houses Tudor, Norman, or seignorially Baroque), the new historicism is not characterized by any clear effort to match historical style with functional representation. Indeed, it is too self-conscious to dress its buildings in any particular historical costume. The new historicism plays with history, decking buildings with casual borrowings. It builds stage sets not with any particular play in mind but just for the good fun of ransacking the properties department.

This shift away from the abstraction and purism of Modernism is not limited to architecture. Across the spectrum of the arts—fiction, painting, dance—there is a marked aesthetic shift from minimalism to representation. For ex-

ample, authors are borrowing narrative forms from old-fashioned genres such as romances and mysteries. Umberto Eco, a scholar of semiotics and a novelist, explains that the impulse toward narrative abstraction in fiction has exhausted itself. Authors have begun to revive more traditional storytelling techniques—though often with “non-innocent eyes.” “It is similar to what happened in painting,” Eco has said. “The avant-garde painters went on destroying the human image, and they arrived at abstract painting, then action painting, then the blank canvas. At one point it became impossible to go forward, and you had to rediscover the image. This is what the writers have done who are coming back to plot. They exploit popular narrative forms, but they do it with an ironic, tongue-in-cheek kind of attitude.” Post-Modern architecture is doing similar things. It is resuscitating old-fashioned genres and vocabulary—towers, gables, arches, porticos, turrets, even moats—and doing so in a non-innocent way.

Like these new writers, some architects treat the building as a text that can be read on at least two levels: one for popular consumption and one for the initiated. Often the building functions both as a suggestion of a genre and as a commentary on it. The architect may borrow elements from various styles—an Art Deco shaft echoing the RCA building, a gable evoking the Plaza Hotel, a dash of Pazzi Chapel, a soupçon of Palladio.

Not only is there no dialogue between the architectural borrowings of these buildings but there is also little dialogue with the city. Post-Modern buildings are usually just as unrelated to the city as the boxes of the Modern movement are. The Battery Park City plan seeks to remedy that great failure of both Modernist and Post-Modernist urbanism by sensitively integrating the buildings into the city.

It does this by borrowing from Manhattan’s best neighborhoods and parks. The result is a collage of the Upper West Side, Gramercy Park, Park Avenue, Central Park, Riverside Park, and Battery Park. Some of the borrowings are interpreted abstractly. The four towers of the World Financial Center, the centerpiece of the development, designed by Cesar Pelli, synthesize Modernist and pre-Second World War skyscraper styles in stone and glass. In other instances borrowing is literal. Most striking is the retrieval of classic New York

City park furniture—the familiar iron-and-wood benches, lighting fixtures, and old-style trash cans. Scott Burton, a sculptor working with Pelli on the project, intends to erect “fragments or wholes of 1930s epic sculpture.” He explains, “In the same way that the tops of buildings are designed to echo skylines and the esplanade is designed to echo New York City parks, the sculptures—on totally contemporary bases and installations—will provide some continuity with old New York. We want to reconnect with what survives and what is familiar.”

There is something unsettling about the end product. This feeling is more than an initial perplexity in front of a giant project that boasts of the modern fiber-optics and microprocessor technology that is concealed beneath its Old New York costume. What’s unsettling is more fundamental. The complex, with its concentrated and reconstituted borrowings, presents itself as a cinerama architectural tour of New York. In its careful search for contextuality it achieves heightened textuality. It proudly keeps the street grid, so representative of New York. But it does so in an area of New York—Lower Manhattan—that never before had a grid. The historicizing guise of the architecture blurs its identity, raising the question of how to tell the real from the fake, the historical from the facsimile. Experiencing it is a little like watching a high-budget and fastidious movie—Francis Ford Coppola’s *One From the Heart*, for example, a film set in Las Vegas but not filmed in Las Vegas; a more perfect and condensed Las Vegas had to be built to get it right.

Battery Park City, certainly the most prominent and in many ways the best of the new large-scale developments in downtown New York, represents very thoughtful and careful efforts to compensate for the faults of Modernism and Post-Modernism. But it doesn’t go beyond that. The great theatrical skyscrapers of the 1920s and 1930s, with their soaring towers, outlandish ornamentation, and people-dwarfing proportions, expressed the arrogance of young corporate success. The glass boxes of the 1960s and 1970s, stripped of frills, devoid of nuance, scoured of emotion, proclaiming their maximization of square footage and nothing more, expressed the bureaucratically structured greed of the mature corporate technocracies. But what does Battery Park City represent? It seems to be a holding action.

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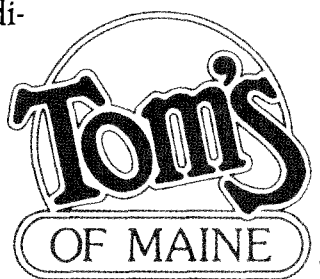
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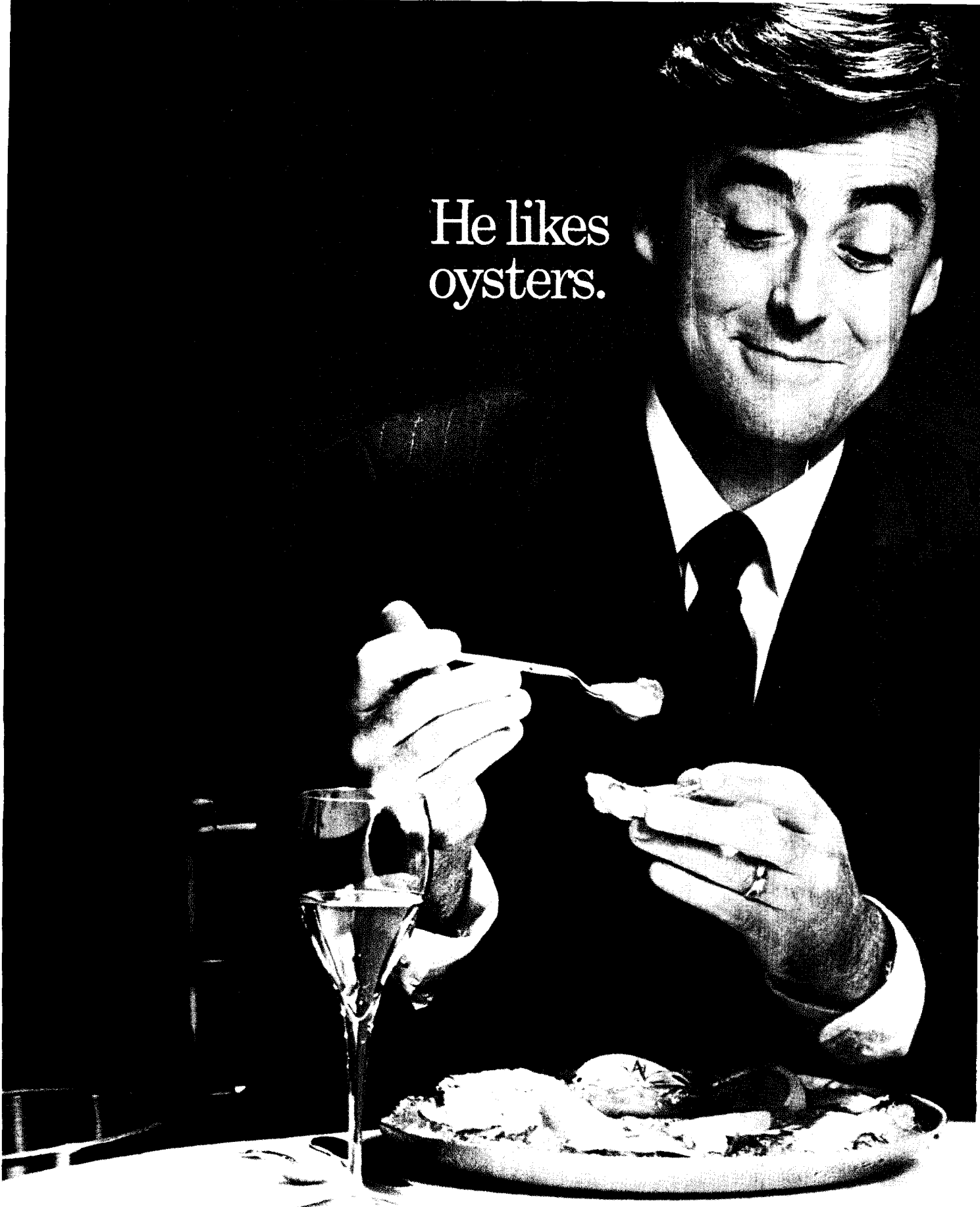
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URBAN DESIGN is a mobilizing public issue in San Francisco. The Manhattanization of what only yesterday was a spectacular natural skyline—shaped by 800-foot hills rising out of the sea—and the erosion of a historic cityscape is not a sign of progress in the eyes of most San Franciscans. From 1965 to 1981 the city's office space more than doubled. And the pace is accelerating. Since 1981, the city has approved permits to build 10.5 million square feet of offices. The growth has occurred all at one time, all in one place, and almost all in one style—high-rise, boxy, cement-and-glass Modernism.

Political pressure developed at the same explosive rate as new high-rise construction. It was incubated in new traffic jams and reinforced by the destruction of architecturally significant buildings, often housing familiar San Francisco institutions, which were razed to make way for the new office towers.

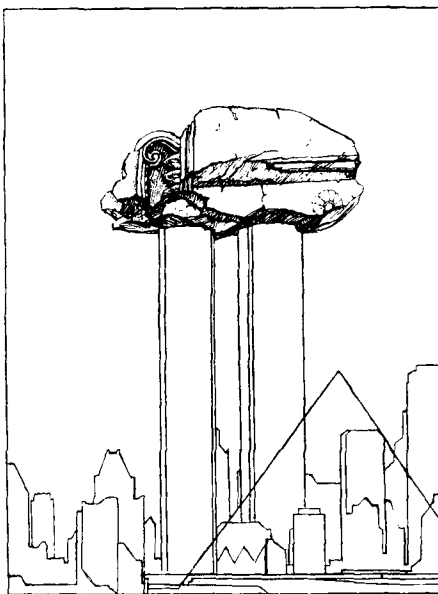
In November of 1983 the San Francisco electorate voted on an anti-high-rise initiative designed to limit and shape the growth of the city's downtown, a thirty-block area encompassing the financial district and the adjacent commercial district around Union Square. The city had just proposed a downtown plan, calling for stringent height and bulk restrictions on new buildings and presenting strategies for the preservation and conservation of old ones. The plan, probably the most innovative and radical in the United States, benefited by appearing moderate beside the anti-high-rise initiative, which lost by a slim margin of 1,919 votes. The message—that the San Francisco electorate wanted further regulation of development—was not new. The initiative was the fourth of its kind over the past twelve years.

The new San Francisco plan is not, as some of its detractors have argued, anti-growth. It is best understood as an effort to manage and shape growth, to designate where it can and cannot occur—and to make the Modernist city, and especially the high-rise box, illegal. Its major proposals include a reduction of the height limit, currently 700 feet, to 550, and a change in zoning laws that would shift further high-rise construction from the financial district to a contiguous area to the south.

The plan also incorporates building-design controls that, according to Dean Macris, San Francisco's planning director, "will effectively do away with the International Style box"; urban-design

guidelines that stress the street over the plaza and the pedestrian over the vehicle; and an ambitious preservation strategy requiring the conservation of 250 buildings and six districts.

Most interesting are the design guidelines, whose complicated formula imposes a tapering form on new high-rise buildings. The formula harks back to the 1916 New York City Zoning Resolution, which, on a simple rule-of-thumb basis, mandated setbacks that decreased bulk as height increased, in order to provide light and air. The San Francisco plan returns to this idea not for its original hygienic purposes—there are lots of ways to design for light and air, such as plazas—but for its design conse-



quences, the wedding-cake buildings of the 1920s and 1930s. The aesthetic outcome of the New York health plan has become the aesthetic goal of the San Francisco design plan.

The design guidelines further encourage architects to work within the traditions of an earlier era. That "ornament is crime," in Adolf Loos's famous formulation, was one of the basic precepts of Modernism. San Francisco is now endorsing what Modernism banned. The plan recommends ornamented façades and "distinctive building tops . . . complex, decorative, intricate means of articulating the building mass to create a visually distinctive termination of the building façade." The plan cites as examples cornices, stepped parapets, hip roofs, mansard roofs, domes, and "visually interesting" flagpoles, steeples, chimneys, and obelisks. The architecture critic Alan Tempko warned in the

San Francisco Chronicle that the guidelines could produce "dwarfish Empire State Buildings" and "toy Chrysler Buildings," adding that "what the plan may require . . . is not a new breed of architects, but milliners."

San Francisco's claim to a serious urban and architectural vision is based on a return to a stylistic past whose social conditions no longer exist. There are more subtle ways to harmonize new construction with the old city fabric—ways that do not rely on historical borrowings and replication but instead build on relationships of height, scale, massing, and materials.

It is not at all clear that the new design stipulations will produce better buildings than did the earlier ones to which the despised high-rises conformed. Design guidelines can determine what kind of buildings will be constructed and how buildings will relate to one another. But they cannot guarantee that the buildings will be good. Only architects can do that—unless, of course, the design rules are so detailed and restrictive that they preclude any major role for the architect, as was the case in Haussmann's Paris. The San Francisco guidelines are not that restrictive; the planners are not that confident and not that powerful.

Haussmann's plan was not just a choice of building style but a great civic design. So was the Ringstrasse in Vienna and the City Beautiful movement at the turn of the century in the United States. These great urban-planning designs imply a strong vision of the city and a strong hold on the city by those who have that vision. Neither is present in San Francisco—or in any other American city. The San Francisco plan is an ambitious attempt to integrate preservation, urban design, and architectural guidelines. It is already becoming a model for other American cities. But for all its concern with livability, for all its fastidiousness of style, for all its determination to put an end to Modernism, the San Francisco plan, like the Battery Park City plan, lacks a forward-looking vision of the city. It is not so much a beginning of something new as a retreat in the face of the very idea of newness. It is not the work of form-givers. It is corrective rather than creative. But it is a welcome corrective.

—Julia Trilling

Julia Trilling, an urban planner who teaches at MIT, is at work on a book about Paris since the Second World War.

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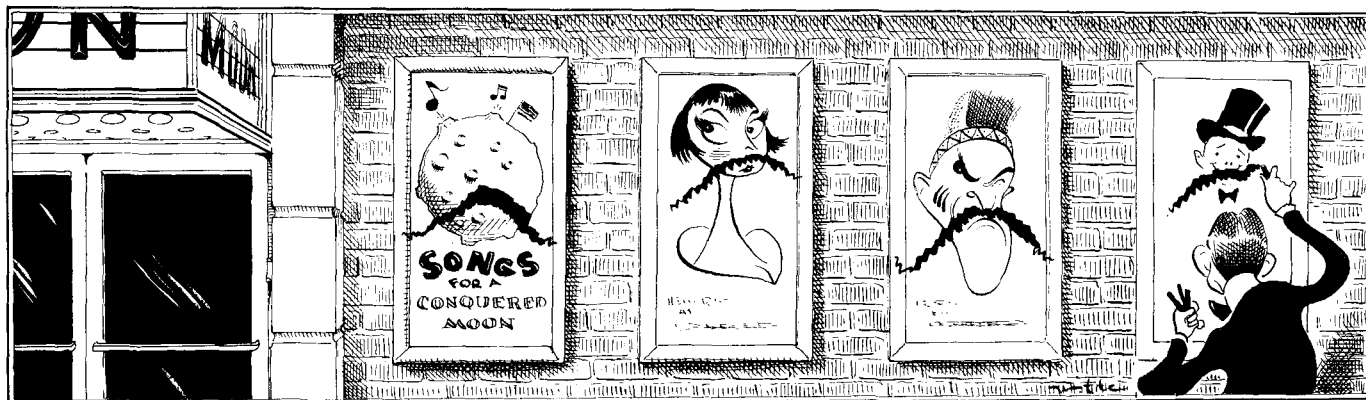


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A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

BY IAN FRAZIER



TO THE THEATERGOER: The performance of *Songs for a Conquered Moon* that you are about to see differs so completely from the spirit of the play as I wrote it that I wish hereby to disavow any and all association between myself and this production. If I could, I would remove my name from the marquee and from the program you hold in your hands; unfortunately, I am informed by my lawyers that contractual considerations render this impossible. When I wrote *Songs*, I set out to weave a net of speech, action, and mood with which to ensnare certain moments in human existence that are as fleeting and evanescent as a dream. Seeing my lovely net filled instead with the unappetizing aesthetic baggage of one particular director and set of actors makes me wonder briefly why I ever chose this regrettable profession in the first place.

My carefully crafted stage directions, absolutely essential to any understanding of the play, have been discarded from this production with a thoroughness that suggests the hired vandal. The freeway pile-up in the middle of Act II has mysteriously disappeared, without an explanation; the chorus of forty Greek sailors commenting on the action has been replaced by two town criers (obviously not Greek); the underwater sequences have been crudely faked; and the marvelous moment at the climax of Act III, when Lord Hargreaves draws his breath to sneeze and his starched shirtfront rolls up under his nose like a window shade, has been so toned down

as to lose all its impact. I could continue this list almost endlessly . . . But really, why bother?

Now, as per the agreement between my attorneys and the attorneys for the Top Contemporary Theater Company, I include here the first few pages of *Songs for a Conquered Moon*, exactly as they were written. I hope that they will give some idea of the very great distance between my play as it was originally intended and the shabby counterfeit you see on the stage before you.

SONGS FOR A CONQUERED MOON

A Play in Three Acts

Cast of Characters

Marcelline, a woman so beautiful it is impossible to look at her without a sharp intake of breath. A strong woman whose looks are a form of disguise; beneath those high-fashion dresses hides an adventurous tomboy with many of the same traits as her father, a billionaire.

John Vanderyohn, a third-generation brain surgeon and outsider. Wears his hair a bit overlong, down to and beyond his shirt collar. The echo of an Old World patronymic in his name is intentional; he should suggest the epic proportions of a Tolstoy, wandering lost in this shopkeepers' century.

Railroad Tom Stevens, a poet, a prophet, a preacher, a liar. A man as full of contradictions as the nightly news. He'd give his last quarter to a little boy and then change his mind. Also, he is able to "shape-shift"—change from human form to that of any other species—in a matter of seconds. Lover to Pamella.

One Stab, a full-blooded Indian. Silent,

laconic, terse, and as violent as the occasion requires. Well over seven feet tall. Mr. Earl's factotum.

Mark Brainard, a young writer and critic with the most brilliant mind of his generation.

Bob, a neighbor from downstairs.

Five Claims Adjusters

The "Solid Gold" Dancers

Assorted Messengers and Passers-by
Some Other People

Act I

The time is the present, approximately.

The setting is anywhere along the Pacific rim; state or country need not be made explicit. Set designers are referred to postcards of the region, Kabuki drawings, and the imitation-French Regency landscaping favored by gangsters and the newly famous. A western pine perhaps, stunted Bonsai-style, clinging to a coastal rock. Stage right, there is a fifty-foot waterfall, and at stage left we see an eight-lane suspension bridge of reinforced concrete. In the background is an active volcano, with molten lava coming down the sides and slowly making its way to the footlights. Overhead a real airport control tower broods above the scene.

The lighting should try for an effect both spare and lush, if possible. It should change almost continually, as the moment dictates. For the second act the light panel must be equipped with at least four state-of-the-art military lasers. Interacting with the cast members and the scenery, the lighting will become practically like another character in the drama, as palpable as the charmed radiance in a painting by Raphael or Giotto or someone of equal stature.

JOHN is seated in a chair downstage right. The residue of a black mood can still be seen

Ian Frazier, whose humor and reporting pieces appear in The New Yorker and The Atlantic, lives in Bigfork, Montana.

around the corners of his eyes. Occasionally he knits his brow and shakes his head. Close at hand is a fresh cup of imported coffee, which he sips from time to time. MARCELLINE enters stage left.

MARCELLINE [*hauntingly*]: Oh, hi, John.

JOHN [*in an upsetting tone*]: Oh, hi, Marcelline. How come you're right here?

MARCELLINE [*movingly*]: I just came in from over where I was.

JOHN [*no longer depressed*]: Oh, that's great!

MARCELLINE [*affectingly*]: So, what if we—

JOHN [*expressing the audience's hidden fears*]: Wait, wait, no—

MARCELLINE [*with perfect timing*]: Hear me out.

JOHN [*in his regular voice*]: Okay.

MARCELLINE [*compellingly*]: What if we went to a store and bought some things?

JOHN [*after a pause of twenty-four seconds*]: Oh, okay.

The scene then shifts to Tibet. MARCELLINE and JOHN come in. TOM is already there.

TOM [*instantly commanding attention*]: Hi, you guys.

MARCELLINE [*responding to what TOM has said*]: Hi.

JOHN: Hi, Tom.

TOM [*memorably*]: What do you say we go and get something to eat?

MARCELLINE [*with a touching expression*]: Thanks. I'd like that.

JOHN [*this is a great line*]: Count me in.

TOM [*excitingly*]: Okay, let's go!

* * *

I am sorry that, owing to limitations of space, this excerpt cannot be longer. I would suggest that those of you as yet unfamiliar with my work go out and buy copies of all my plays, the better to judge future productions for yourselves. And I would also ask that the next time you want to see a play by me, you call me first to ask whether the production is good or not. (I am home most evenings, and if I'm out, someone can take a message.) I know full well that a writer's relationship with his audience is the most important one he has. After all, without you, where would I be? I would even go to your houses, no matter how long it would take to see everybody. If you have any questions, I would welcome the opportunity to sit down with each of you on an individual basis to discuss just how great my play could have been. □

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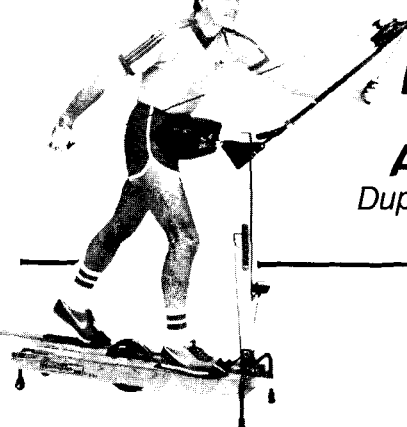
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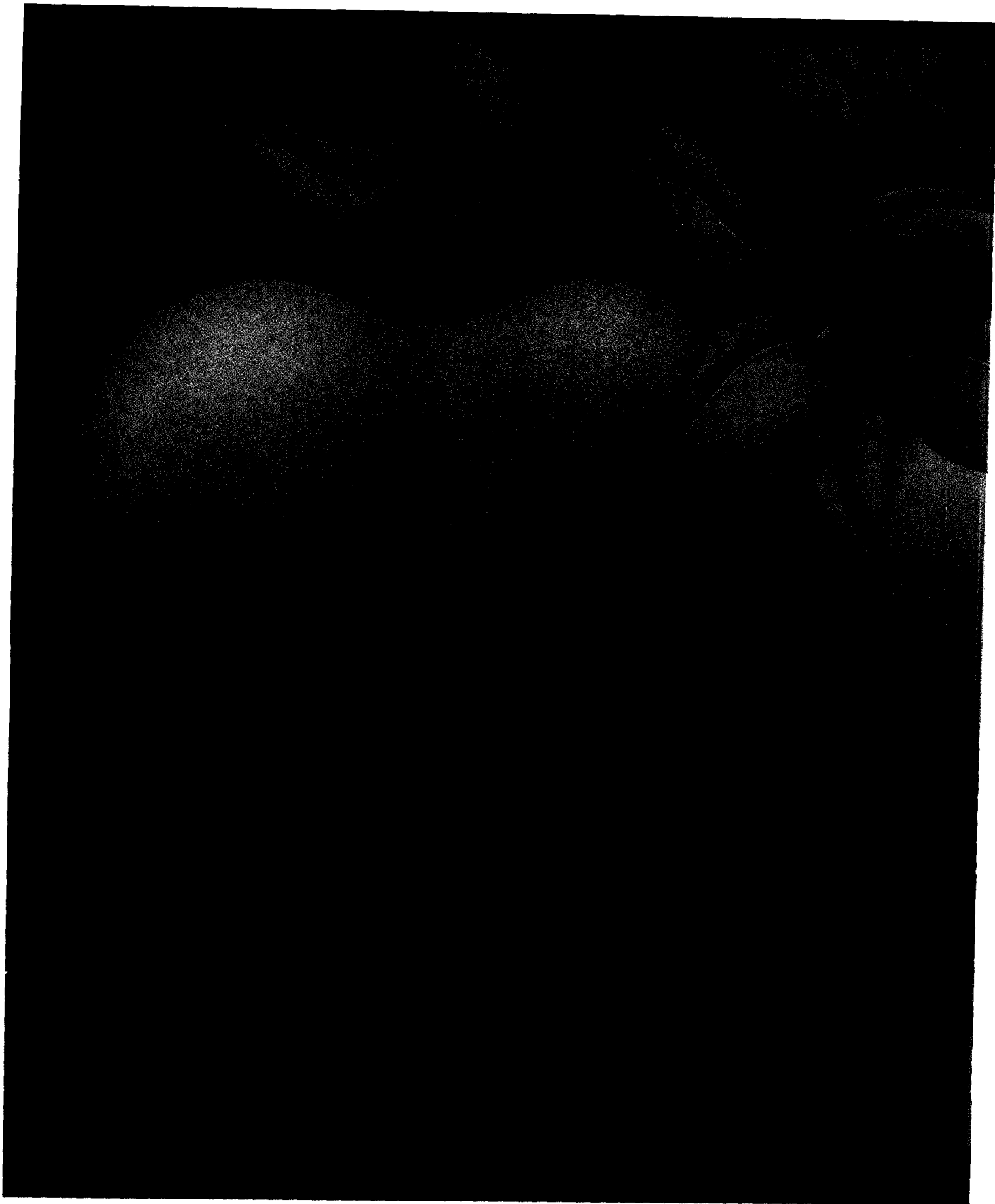
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Too often, "systems integration" turns out to mean buying more of a

— continued on next page —



—continued from preceding page—

particular vendor's products. At the core of some proposals is an open-ended commitment to a single supplier.

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The kind of detail our technical friends had in mind would leave the average reader numb. The items that follow are rated G — suitable for the

*An integrated office
system shouldn't have to mean
junking products you already own.
Nor a shotgun wedding with
a single supplier.*

“

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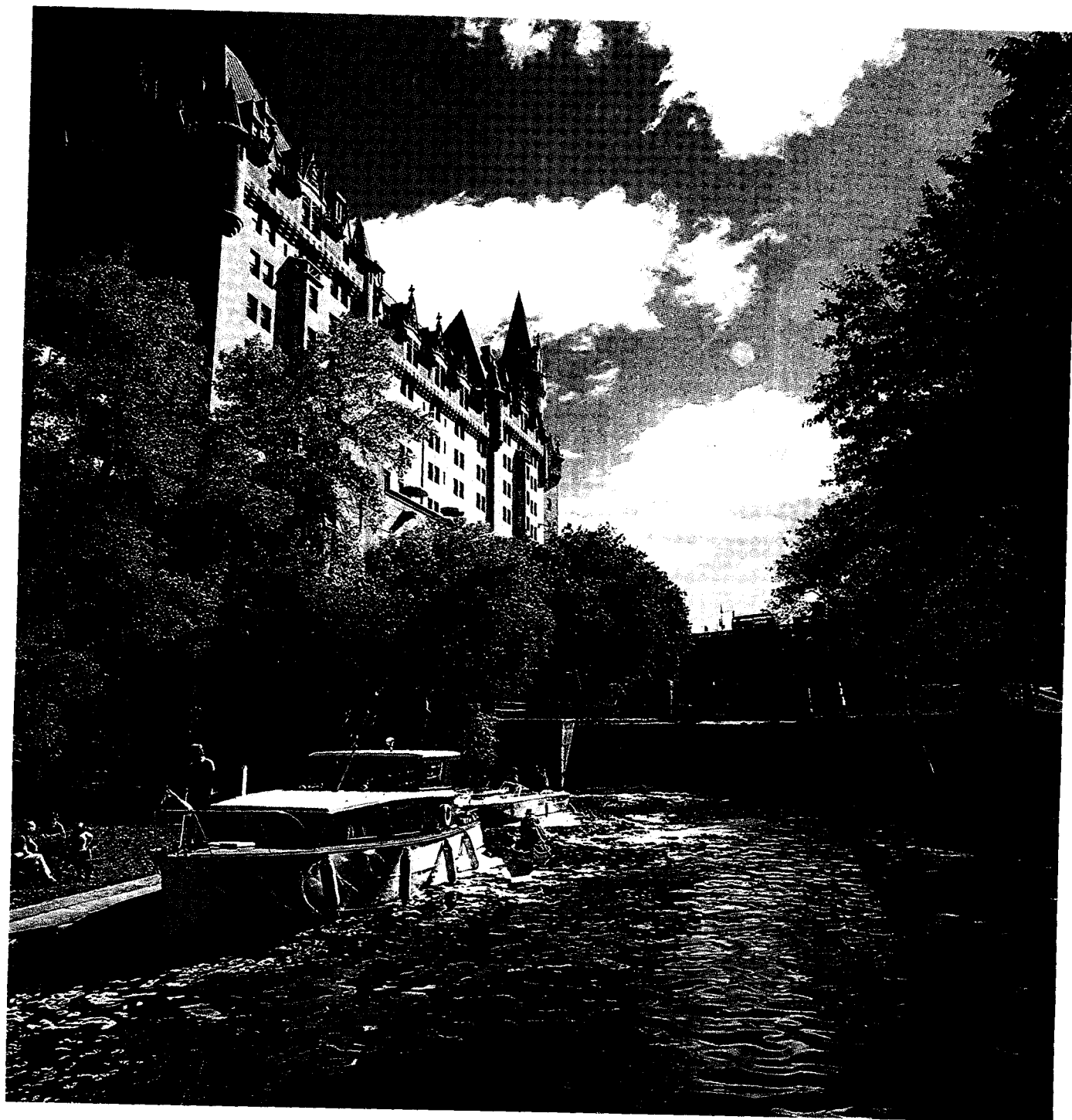
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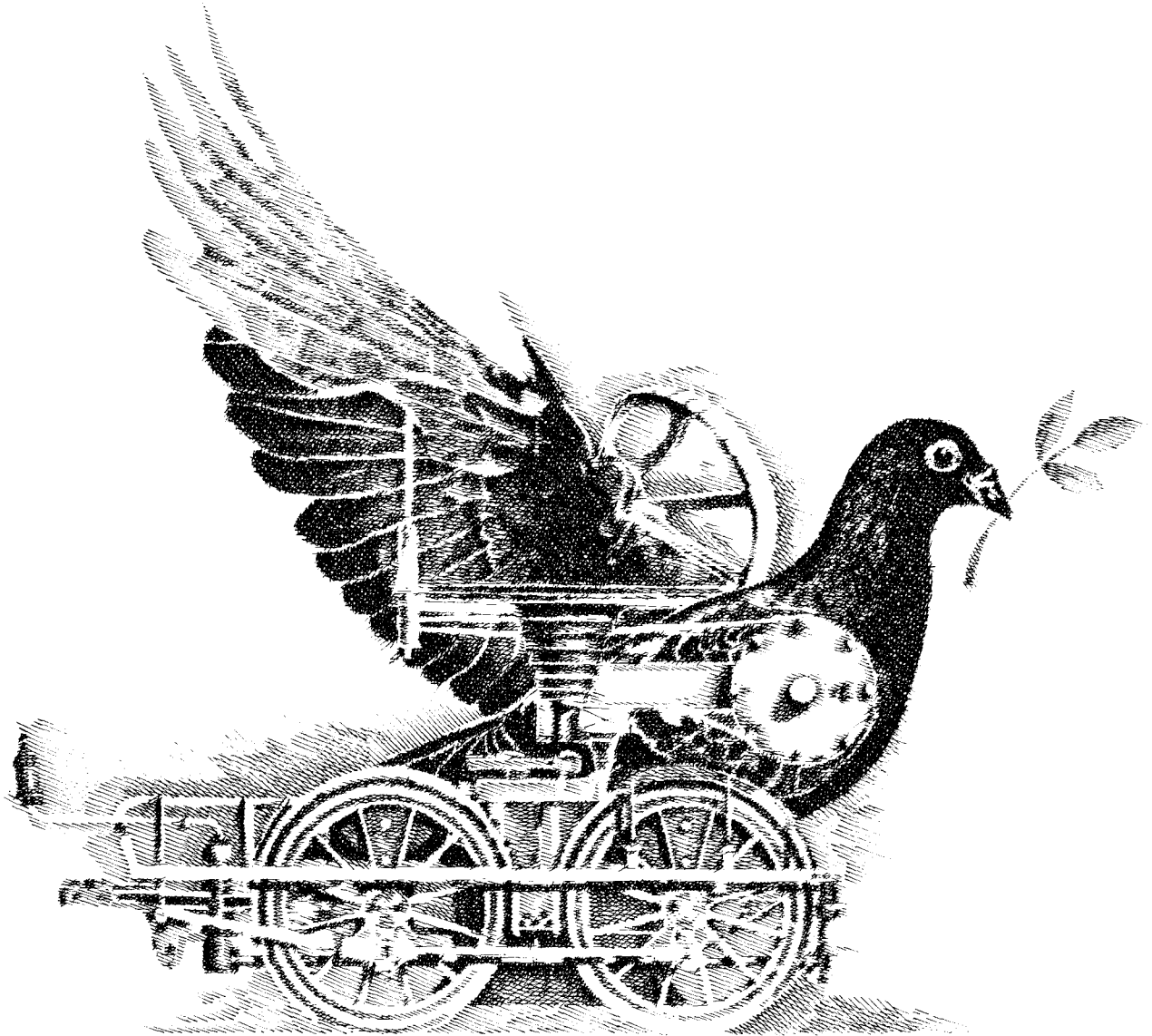
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Geneva can be a giant step toward a more secure twenty-first century

REDUCING THE RISK OF NUCLEAR WAR

BY ROBERT S. MCNAMARA AND HANS A. BETHE

THROUGHOUT HISTORY WAR HAS BEEN THE FINAL ARBITER of disputes and a finite disaster. Unbounded calamities—the apocalypse, Armageddon—were left for mythology. Forty years ago Hiroshima put an end to that distinction. This insight was expressed with exceptional clarity by President Reagan when he said that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” And yet both superpowers’ policies rely on thinking that is mired in the pre-nuclear past. Each strives ceaselessly to improve its arsenal and lays plans for fighting the war that must never be fought.

Although the risk of war between East and West seems low at present, should a military confrontation occur the chance that it would escalate to all-out nuclear war is very, very high. That danger will haunt us as long as we persist

on our present course. The combination of these factors—a high probability that war would destroy our society, and an indefinitely long exposure to that danger—produces a risk that is unacceptable. There is a widespread intuitive awareness of this peril.

When the President proposes a “Star Wars” space defense that would make nuclear weapons “impotent and obsolete,” there is, therefore, an understandable outpouring of public support, even though most technical experts, inside the government and out, consider his proposal to be a nostalgic dream without a discernible connection to the realities of nuclear physics.

How, then, are we to escape our predicament? By heeding Einstein’s admonition that “the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of think-

ing." If we clearly face the implications of nuclear weapons, we will see the path through the hazards that science has forever unveiled. The path is not easy, but if it is followed with persistence, the risk of nuclear war will constantly recede and confidence that we are masters of our fate will be rebuilt.

The first large step toward our goal can be taken at the Geneva arms talks. It should be possible to pursue a ballistic-missile-defense research program, as desired by the President, and at the same time to negotiate a strengthening of the Anti-Ballistic-Missile Treaty. By that means the U.S. and Soviet positions on space defense could be reconciled and the way thereby opened to sharp cuts in offensive forces shaped in a manner that would lead to a much safer world in the twenty-first century.

In developing this thesis we will discuss:

—The situation today: a world with tens of thousands of nuclear weapons, with both sides pursuing nuclear war-fighting strategies, and with each fearing that the other is seeking to achieve a first-strike capability.

—The President's recognition of the danger in the present situation; his proposal to substitute a defensive strategy, based on a perfect defense, that would permit the destruction of all nuclear weapons; and the reasons why virtually all the experts consider such a goal unattainable.

—Alternative "partial" defensive systems, which would be added to, not substituted for, offensive nuclear weapons, and which would almost certainly lead to a rapid escalation of the arms race and its extension into space.

—A totally different strategy, which would build on the ABM Treaty, move away from the nuclear-war-fighting mania, permit us to enter the twenty-first century with radically smaller nuclear forces (perhaps no more than five percent of the size of present inventories), and dramatically reduce the risk that our civilization will be destroyed by a nuclear conflagration.

—The way in which the Geneva negotiations can be structured to lay a foundation for a more secure tomorrow.

The Situation Today: Nuclear Forces That Reflect War-Fighting Doctrines

THE SUPERPOWERS' ARSENALS HOLD SOME 50,000 nuclear warheads. Each, on average, is far more destructive than the bomb that obliterated Hiroshima. Just one of our thirty-six strategic submarines has more firepower than man has shot against man throughout history. Thousands of nuclear weapons are ready for immediate use against targets close to hand or half a globe

away, but just a few hundred warheads could utterly demolish the largest nation.

To deter war, each side seeks to persuade the other, and itself, that it is prepared to wage a nuclear war that would have the military objectives of a bygone age. What is known of Soviet nuclear-war plans is open to interpretation, but these plans appear to rely on tactics derived from Russia's pre-nuclear military experience. Current U.S. defense policy calls for nuclear forces that are sufficient to support a "controlled and protracted" nuclear war that could eliminate the Soviet leadership and that would even permit the United States to "prevail."

Nuclear-war-fighting notions lead to enormous target lists and huge forces. Our 11,000 strategic warheads are directed against some 5,000 targets. And NATO's war plans are based on early first use of some 6,000 tactical nuclear weapons in response to a Soviet conventional attack. Both NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries routinely train their forces for nuclear operations. War-fighting doctrines create a desire for increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons which technology always promises to satisfy but never does. Today both sides are committed to programs that will threaten a growing portion of the adversary's most vital military assets with increasingly swift destruction.

These armories and war plans are more than macabre symbols for bolstering self-confidence. Both Moscow and Washington presume that nuclear weapons are likely to be used should hostilities break out. But neither knows how to control the escalation that would almost certainly follow. No one can tell in advance what response any nuclear attack might bring. No one knows who will still be able to communicate with whom, or what will be left to say, or whether any message could possibly be believed.

When our secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, was asked whether it really would be possible to control forces and make calculated decisions amid the destruction and confusion of nuclear battle, he replied, "I just don't have any idea. I don't know that anybody has any idea." Surely it is reckless to stake a nation's survival on detailed plans for something about which no one has any idea.

It would be vastly more reckless to attempt a disarming first strike. Nevertheless, the arms race is driven by deep-seated fears held by each side that the other has, or is seeking, the ability to execute just such a strike.

The large force of powerful and increasingly accurate Soviet ICBMs has created the fear of a first strike in the minds of many U.S. leaders. According to this scenario, the Soviet missiles could, at one stroke, eliminate most of our Minuteman ICBMs; our surviving submarines and bombers would enable us only to retaliate against Soviet cities; but we would not do so because of our fear of a Soviet counterattack on our urban population; and thus we would have no choice but to yield to all Soviet demands.

A more subtle variant of this nightmare would have the Soviets exacting political blackmail by merely threatening such an attack.

Those who accept the first-strike scenario view the So-

Robert McNamara was secretary of defense under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Hans Bethe is an emeritus professor of physics at Cornell University and a winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics. The authors wish to express their gratitude to Kurt Gottfried, a professor of physics at Cornell, for assisting them in shaping the argument of this article.

viet ICBMs and the men who command them as objects in a universe decoupled from the real world. They assume that Soviet leaders are confident that their highly complex systems, which have been tested only individually and in a controlled environment, would perform their myriad tasks in perfect harmony during the most cataclysmic battle in history; that our electronic eavesdropping satellites would detect no hint of the intricate preparations that such a strike would require; that we would not launch our missiles when the attack was detected; and that the thousands of submarine-based and airborne warheads that would surely survive would not be used against a wide array of vulnerable Soviet military targets. Finally, they assume Soviet confidence that we would not use those vast surviving forces to retaliate against the Soviet population, even though tens of millions of Americans had been killed by the Soviet attack on our silos. Only madmen would contemplate such a gamble. Whatever else they may be, the leaders of the Soviet Union are not madmen.

That a first strike is not a rational Soviet option has also been stated by President Reagan's own Scowcroft Commission, which found that no combination of attacks from Soviet submarines and land-based ICBMs could catch our bombers on the ground as well as our Minutemen in their silos. In addition, our submarines at sea, which carry a substantial percentage of our strategic warheads, are invulnerable: in the race between techniques to hide submarines and those to find them, the fugitives have always been ahead and are widening their lead. As the chief of naval operations has said, the oceans are getting "more opaque" as we "learn more about them."

Despite all such facts, the war-fighting mania and the fear of a first strike are eroding confidence in deterrence. Though both sides are aware that a nuclear war that engaged even a small fraction of their arsenals would be an unparalleled disaster, each is vigorously developing and deploying new weapons systems that it will view as highly threatening when the opponent also acquires them. Thus our newest submarines will soon carry missiles accurate enough to destroy Soviet silos. When the Soviets follow suit, as they always do, their offshore submarines will for the first time pose a simultaneous threat to our command centers, bomber bases, and Minuteman ICBMs.

The absurd struggle to improve the ability to wage "the war that cannot be fought" has shaken confidence in the ability to avert that war. The conviction that we must change course is shared by groups and individuals as diverse as the freeze movement, the President, the Catholic bishops, the bulk of the nation's scientists, the President's chief arms-control negotiator, and ourselves. All are saying, directly or by implication, that nuclear warheads serve no military purpose whatsoever. They are not weapons. They are totally useless except to deter one's opponent from using his warheads. Beyond this point the consensus dissolves, because the changes of direction being advocated follow from very different diagnoses of the predicament.

The Strategic Defense Initiative

THE PRESIDENT'S APPROACH HAS BEEN TO LAUNCH the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a vast program for creating an impenetrable shield that would protect the entire nation against a missile attack and would therefore permit the destruction of all offensive nuclear weapons. The President and the Secretary of Defense remain convinced that this strategic revolution is at hand.

Virtually all others associated with the SDI now recognize that such a leakproof defense is so far in the future, if indeed it ever proves feasible, that it offers no solution to our present dilemma. They therefore advocate other forms of ballistic-missile defense. These alternative systems range from defense of hardened targets (for example, missile silos and command centers) to partial protection of our population.

For the sake of clarity we will call these alternative programs Star Wars II, to distinguish them from the President's original proposal, which will be labeled Star Wars I. It is essential to understand that these two versions of Star Wars have diametrically opposite objectives. The President's program, if achieved, would substitute defensive for offensive forces. In contrast, Star Wars II systems have one characteristic in common: they would all require that we continue with offensive forces but add the defensive systems to them.

And that is what causes the problem. President Reagan, in a little-remembered sentence in the speech announcing his Strategic Defense Initiative, on March 23, 1983, said, "If paired with offensive systems, [defensive systems] can be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy, and no one wants that." The President was concerned that the Soviets would regard a decision to supplement our offensive forces with defenses as an attempt to achieve a first-strike capability. That is exactly how they are interpreting our program; that is why they say there will be no agreement on offensive weapons until we give up Star Wars.

Before any further discussion of why Star Wars II will accelerate the arms race, it would be useful to examine why the President's original proposal, Star Wars I, will prove an unattainable dream in our lifetime.

The reason is clear. There is no evidence that any combination of the "defensive technologies" now on the most visionary of horizons can undo the revolution wrought by the invention of nuclear explosives. "War" is only one of the concepts whose meanings were changed forever at Hiroshima. "Defense" is another. Before Hiroshima, defense relied on attrition—exhausting an enemy's human, material, and moral resources. The Royal Air Force won the Battle of Britain by attaining a 10 percent attrition rate against the Nazi air force, because repeated attacks could not be sustained against such odds. The converse, a 90-percent-effective defense, could not preserve us against even one modest nuclear attack.

This example illustrates that strategic defense in the

missile age is prodigiously difficult at best, an impression that is borne out by a detailed examination of all the schemes that propose to mount defenses in space. The term "defensive technologies" may conjure up images of mighty fortifications, but it refers to delicate instruments: huge mirrors of exquisite precision, ultra-sensitive detectors of heat and radiation, optical systems that must find and aim at a one-foot target thousands of miles away and moving at four miles per second, and so forth. All these marvels must work near the theoretical limit of perfection; even small losses in precision would lead to unacceptably poor performance. Quite feeble blows against orbiting "battle stations" bearing such crown jewels of technology could render them useless.

Such attacks need not be surgical. If the Soviets were about to demolish us with a nuclear attack, they would surely not shrink from destroying our unmanned space

WIND AND HARDSCRABBLE

It's wind, not rain, dry cattle need.
Vanes of windmills spinning all day
turn lead pipes into water.
Wind makes metal couplings sough
like lullabies. As long as there is wind,
calm steers keep grazing, believing

there is always water. On still days
steers are nervous,
lashing their tails at horseflies
always out of reach. They stomp
flat hooves and tremble, bleeding,
and thrust their dehorned heads

between barbed wires. When it blows,
steers don't need heaven.
Wind is mystery enough.
They rasp dry tongues across salt blocks,
eyes closed, and wind brings
odors of grainfields miles away.

Even in drought they feast,
the curled grass crisp as winter stubble.
Parched, they wade still pastures
shimmering in heat waves
and muzzle deep in stock tanks
filled and overflowing.

—Walter McDonald

platforms. And they have had nuclear-armed ABM interceptors ideally suited to that task for two decades. Such weapons could punch a large hole in our shield of space platforms, through which the Soviet first strike could immediately be launched. Hence any defense based on orbiting platforms is fatally vulnerable, or, as Edward Teller has put it, "Lasers in space won't fill the bill—they must be deployed in great numbers at terrible cost and could be destroyed in advance of an attack." The wide variety of countermeasures that have been developed during decades of ABM research show that every other proposed space-defense scheme has its own Achilles' heel.

The prospect of achieving the goal of Star Wars I has been succinctly put by Robert S. Cooper, the Pentagon's director of advanced research: "There is no combination of gold or platinum bullets that we see in our technology arsenal . . . that would make it possible to do away with our strategic offensive ICBM forces." Until there are inventions that have not even been imagined, a defense robust and cheap enough to replace deterrence will remain a pipe dream. Emotional appeals that defense is morally superior to deterrence are therefore "pernicious," as former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger has said, because "in our lifetime, and that of our children, cities will be protected by the forbearance of those on the other side, or through effective deterrence." Harold Brown, also a former secretary of defense, has expressed the same thought.

Star Wars II

VIRTUALLY EVERYONE IN THE ADMINISTRATION NOW agrees that a leakproof defense of population is not in the cards for decades, if ever. Therefore, while the President and the Secretary of Defense adhere to their original proposal, the technicians and others working on the SDI program are producing less radical rationales that blur crucial distinctions between hard-point defense, which is technically feasible, and comprehensive defense, which is not. These ever-shifting and intermingled rationales for Star Wars II call for careful scrutiny.

The most prominent fallback position is that even a partially effective defense would introduce a vital element of uncertainty into Soviet attack plans and would thereby enhance deterrence. This assumes that the Soviet military's sole concern is to attack us and that any uncertainty in their minds is therefore to our advantage. But any suspicions they may harbor about our wishing to achieve a first-strike capability would be inflamed by a partially effective defense.

Why? Because a leaky umbrella offers no protection in a downpour but is quite useful in a drizzle. That is, such a defense would collapse under a full-scale Soviet first strike but might cope adequately with the depleted Soviet forces that had survived a U.S. first strike.

Americans often find it incredible that the Soviets could suspect us of such monstrous intentions, especially since

we did not attack them when we enjoyed overwhelming nuclear superiority.*

Nevertheless, the Russians distrust us deeply. They know that a first strike was not always excluded from U.S. strategic thinking, and they have never forgotten Hitler's surprise attack on them, in 1941, a disaster that dwarfed Pearl Harbor.

It would be foolhardy to dismiss as mere propaganda the Soviets' repeated warnings that a nationwide U.S. strategic defense is highly provocative. Their promise to respond with a large offensive buildup is no empty threat. Each superpower's highest priority has been a nuclear arsenal that can assuredly penetrate to its opponent's vital assets. No partially effective space defense can alter that priority.

Nor will those who now fear a Soviet first strike see their fears allayed by such a defense. On the contrary, these fears will be aggravated. The Soviet response will be based on traditional worst-case analysis, which will inevitably overestimate the effectiveness of our defense, just as in the 1960s and 1970s we targeted many more warheads on Moscow as soon as it was surrounded by dubious ABM defenses. Being keenly aware of the fragility of our defenses, we would feel compelled to respond with a buildup of our own.

The claim that a Star Wars II defense would be a catalyst for arms reduction is therefore specious. Furthermore, arms control has been difficult enough when it has had to deal only with large offensive forces whose capabilities are relatively clear. It would be vastly harder to strike a bargain over space defenses whose effectiveness would be a deep mystery even to their owners, because they could never be tested under remotely realistic conditions.

Important support for Star Wars II stems from the belief that it best exploits our technological advantage in the inescapable competition with the Soviet Union. Those who hold this view ignore post-Hiroshima history and have less respect than we for the Soviet regime's ability to match our weapons and extract sacrifices from its people.

The authors have personally observed and participated in the nuclear competition for decades. The U.S. invention of the atomic bomb was the most remarkable technical breakthrough in military history. And yet the Soviet Union, though devastated by war and operating from a technological base far weaker than ours, was able to create nuclear forces that gave it a plausible deterrent in an astonishingly short time. Virtually every technical initiative in the nuclear arms race has come from the United States, but the net result has been a steady erosion of American security. There is no evidence that space weapons will be an exception, for a crude nuclear blunderbuss can foil sophistication.

Then why are the Soviets so worried by Star Wars? Because strategic defense probably could succeed if the Russians played dead. For that reason they must respond.

This will require vast expenditures they can ill afford, and will ultimately diminish their security. But that is equally true for us, whether we recognize it or not.

To summarize, these rationales for Star Wars II propose to achieve a superior strategic posture by combining unattainable technical goals with a policy rooted in concepts whose validity died at Hiroshima.

An Alternative Vision for the Twenty-first Century

THE PUBLIC'S INTUITIVE AWARENESS OF THE UNACCEPTABLE risk posed by our present nuclear strategy is well founded. Our security demands that we replace that policy with one that is in firm touch with nuclear reality. If neither Star Wars I nor Star Wars II is the answer, what is?

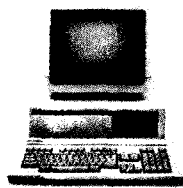
The risk of catastrophic escalation of nuclear operations, and the futility of defense, lead us to base our proposal on the axiom that the initiation of nuclear warfare against a similarly armed opponent would be an irrational act. Hence, as we have said, nuclear weapons have only one purpose—that of preventing their use. They must not do less; they cannot do more. Thus, a restructuring of nuclear forces designed to reduce the risk of nuclear war must be our goal. All policies, every existing program, and each new initiative must be judged in that light.

Post-Hiroshima history has taught us three lessons that shape the present proposal. First, all our technological genius and economic prowess cannot make us secure if they leave the Soviet Union insecure: we can have either mutual security or mutual insecurity. Second, while profound differences and severe competition will surely continue to mark U.S.-Soviet relations, the nuclear-arms race is a burden to both sides, and it is in our mutual interest to rid ourselves of its menace. And third, no realistic scheme that would rid us of all nuclear weapons has ever been formulated.

The ultimate goal, therefore, should be a state of mutual deterrence at the lowest force levels consistent with stability. That requires invulnerable forces that could unquestionably respond to any attack and inflict unacceptable damage. If those forces are to remain limited, it is equally essential that they not threaten the opponent's deterrent. These factors would combine to produce a stable equilibrium in which the risk of nuclear war would be very remote.

This kind of deterrence posture should not be confused with the one currently prevailing among U.S. and Soviet nuclear forces. The 25,000 warheads that each nation possesses did not come about through any plan but simply descended on the world as a consequence of continuing technical innovations and the persistent failure to recognize

*In terms of numbers of strategic nuclear warheads, for example, the United States in 1960 had 6,300 to the Soviets' 200; in 1965 the figures were 5,000 to 600; in 1970, 4,500 to 1,800; in 1975, 8,000 to 2,700; in 1980, 9,200 to 6,000; in 1985, 11,100 to 8,500; and by 1990, assuming that U.S. and Soviet strategic forces are constrained by the SALT II agreement, the figures will be 13,600 to 13,000.



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that nuclear explosives are not weapons in any traditional sense.

The forces we propose could include a mix of submarines, bombers, and ICBMs. The land-based components should be made invulnerable in themselves, by some combination of mobile ICBMs and reductions in the number of warheads per missile. Two considerations would determine the ultimate size of the force: that it deter attack with confidence, and that any undetected or sudden violation of arms-control treaties would not imperil this deterrence. We believe that, ultimately, strategic forces having as few as 10 percent of the currently deployed warheads would meet these criteria, and tactical forces could be eliminated entirely. In short, the present inventory of 50,000 warheads could be cut to perhaps 2,000.

Before this goal is reached, other nuclear powers (China, France, Great Britain, and possibly others) will have to be involved in the process of reducing nuclear arsenals, lest their weapons disturb the strategic equilibrium.

The proposed changes in U.S. and Soviet strategic and tactical forces would require, as would the President's SDI, complementary changes in NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional forces, or appropriate increases in NATO's conventional power. If the latter was necessary, it could be achieved at a fraction of the costs we will incur if we continue on our present course.

Having identified our goal, how can we move toward it? Some of our new policies would depend solely on the United States and its allies; others would require Soviet cooperation. The former should be governed by the dictum, attributed to President Eisenhower, that "we need what we need." Were we to drop futile war-fighting notions, we would see that many things we already have or are busily acquiring are either superfluous or downright dangerous to us, no matter what the Soviets do. Tactical nuclear weapons in Europe are a prime example, and the Administration's policy of reducing their numbers should be accelerated. Other examples are programs that will haunt us when the Soviets copy them: sophisticated anti-satellite weapons, sea-based cruise missiles, and highly accurate submarine-launched ballistic missiles. We are more dependent on satellites than the Soviets are, and more vulnerable to attack from the sea. Many of these weapons are valid bargaining chips because they threaten the Soviets, just as so much of their arsenal gratuitously threatens us.

The Geneva Negotiations

GENEVA PROVIDES AN INVALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO take a giant step toward our goals. Is that not a preposterous assertion, the reader may well ask, for have we not claimed that Star Wars, which the President refuses to abandon, precludes arms control and guarantees an arms race? Surprisingly enough, it is not, if one takes account of a remarkable speech that Paul Nitze, the Administration's senior adviser on arms control, gave in Philadel-

phia on February 20. If the points that Nitze made are accepted, it should be possible for the President to negotiate toward the goals we have set without abandoning a strategic-defense research program.

Mr. Nitze presented two criteria that must be met before the deployment of strategic defenses could be justified: the defense must work even in the face of direct attack on itself, and it must be cheaper to augment the defense than the offense.

As we have seen, nothing that satisfies these criteria is on the horizon—a judgment in which Nitze apparently concurs, for he foresaw that during an initial period of "at least the next ten years" no defenses would be deployed. During that period we would, in Nitze's words, "reverse the erosion" of the ABM Treaty. That is a window of opportunity, as we shall see.

Nitze envisioned the possibility of two additional periods following the first. In the second phase some form of Star Wars II would be deployed alongside our offensive weapons, provided the two criteria he laid down had been met. If we entered the second phase, it probably would last for at least decades.

Ultimately, if Star Wars I proved practical, the second phase would be followed by a third, in which the leak-proof shield would be deployed and offensive weapons destroyed.

Mr. Nitze acknowledged that the problem of how to write an arms-control agreement during the second phase that would limit offensive arms while permitting defensive systems had not been solved. He said it would be "tricky." We agree. We know of no one who has suggested how to do it. But by implication Nitze was saying that this is an issue for future negotiations and that it need not stand in the way of a new agreement at this time.

Now back to the first phase, the window of opportunity. Why the fixation during this phase on the ABM Treaty? Because the treaty formalizes the insight that not just the deployment but even the development of strategic defenses would stimulate an offensive buildup. Were the treaty to collapse, we could not move toward our goal of reducing the offensive threat. Hence the fleeting window of opportunity: strengthening of the ABM Treaty coupled with negotiations on offensive strategic forces.

The treaty forbids certain types of radars and severely restricts the testing of components of ABM systems. Both of these provisions are endangered.

The Soviets are building a radar in Siberia that apparently will violate the ABM Treaty once it is completed. While this radar is of marginal military significance, it has great political import and poses an issue that must be resolved to the satisfaction of the U.S. government.

In the near future the United States will be violating the restrictions on tests in spirit and probably in law if we place our research program on the schedule implied by Lieutenant General James Abrahamson, the director of the SDI, when he said, on March 15, that a "reasonably confident decision" on whether to build Star Wars could be made by

the end of the decade or in the early 1990s. If we are unwilling to refrain from the tests associated with such a schedule, the Soviets will, with good reason, assume that we are preparing to deploy defenses. They will assiduously develop their response, and the prospect for offensive-arms agreements at Geneva will evaporate. The treaty's central purpose is to give each nation confidence that the other is not readying a sudden deployment of defenses: we must demonstrate that we will adhere to the treaty in that spirit.

The ABM Treaty does not forbid anti-satellite weapons, and unless that loophole is closed we will have an arms race in space long before we have any further understanding of what, if anything, space defense could accomplish. Hence a verifiable ban on the testing of anti-satellite weapons should become a part of the ABM Treaty regime. Because we are much more dependent on satellites than the Soviets are, such a ban would be very much in our interest.

A strengthened ABM Treaty would allow the Geneva negotiations to address the primary objective of offensive-arms control: increasing the stability of deterrence by eliminating the perceptions of both sides that the other has, or is seeking, a first-strike capability. This problem can be dealt with through hard-headed arms control. There is no need to rely on the adversary's intentions: his capabilities are visible. Mutual and verifiable reductions in the ratio of each side's accurate warheads to the number of the other side's vulnerable missile launchers could reduce the first-strike threat to the point at which it would be patently incredible to everyone. Both sides have such immense forces that they should concentrate on quickly reducing the most threatening components—those that stand in the way of stability and much lower force levels.

What is needed is deep cuts in the number of warheads, but cuts shaped to eliminate the fear of first strikes. Because the two sides have such dissimilar strategic forces, this process will be very difficult, but it should be possible in the first phase to accomplish reductions of 50 percent. It would be reasonable, for example, for the United States to insist on large reductions in the number of Soviet ICBM warheads, but in the bargaining we must be ready to make substantial cuts in our counterpart forces, including, for example, the silo-killing submarine-based D-5 missile.

Conclusion

IN SUM, THE ARMS NEGOTIATIONS NOW BEGINNING IN Geneva represent a historic opportunity to lay the foundation for entering the twenty-first century with a totally different nuclear strategy, one of mutual security instead of war-fighting; with vastly smaller nuclear forces,

perhaps 2,000 weapons in place of 50,000; and with a dramatically lower risk that our civilization will be destroyed by nuclear war.

Several themes should govern our attitudes and policies as we move through those negotiations toward our long-term objectives.

Each side must recognize that neither will permit the other to achieve a meaningful superiority; attempts to gain such an advantage are dangerous as well as futile.

The forces pushing each side in the direction of a "first-strike" posture must, at least from the standpoint of the adversary, be reversed. A stable balance at the lowest possible level should be the goal.

Our technological edge should be exploited vigorously to enhance our security, but in a manner that does not threaten the stability of deterrence. Space surveillance and data processing, which form a large portion of the SDI program, illustrate what technology could contribute to treaty verification.

We must not forget Winston Churchill's warning that "the Stone Age may return on the gleaming wings of science," and we must learn to shed the fatalistic belief that new technologies, no matter how threatening, cannot be stopped. While laboratory research cannot be constrained by verifiable agreement, technology itself provides increasingly powerful tools that can be used to impede development and to stop deployment. For example, only an absence of political will hinders a verifiable agreement preventing the deployment of more-threatening ballistic missiles, because they require many observable flight tests.

We must also allay legitimate fears on both sides: the Soviets' fear of our technology, and our fear of their obsessive secrecy. These apprehensions provide an opportunity for a bargain: Soviet acceptance of more-intrusive verification in return for American constraints on applications of its technological innovation. Penetration of Soviet secrecy is to our mutual advantage, even if the Kremlin does not yet understand that. So is technological restraint, even though it runs against the American grain.

We have reached our absurd confrontation by a long series of steps, many of which seemed to be rational in their time. Step by step we can undo much of the damage. The program sketched in this article would initiate that process. It draws on traditional American virtues: striving with persistence and resourcefulness toward a high but attainable goal.

This program would steadily reduce the risks we now face and would begin to restore confidence in the future. It does not pretend to rid us totally of the nuclear menace. It addresses our first duty and obligation: to assure the survival of our civilization. Our descendants could then grapple with the problem that no one yet knows how to attack. □

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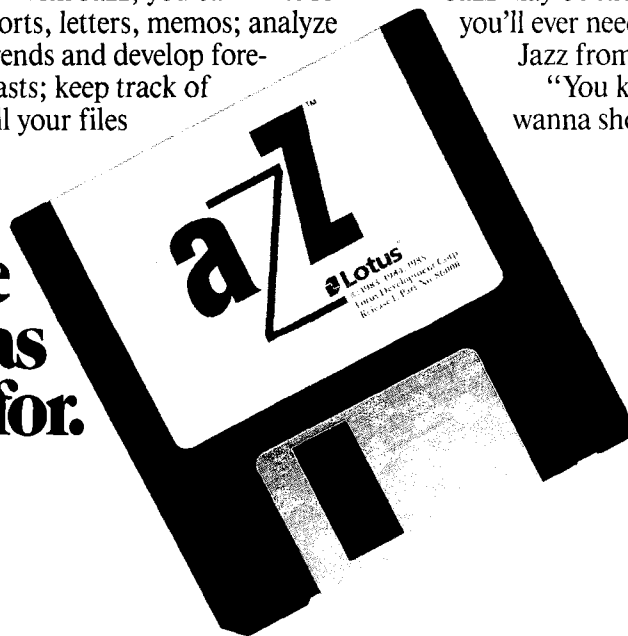
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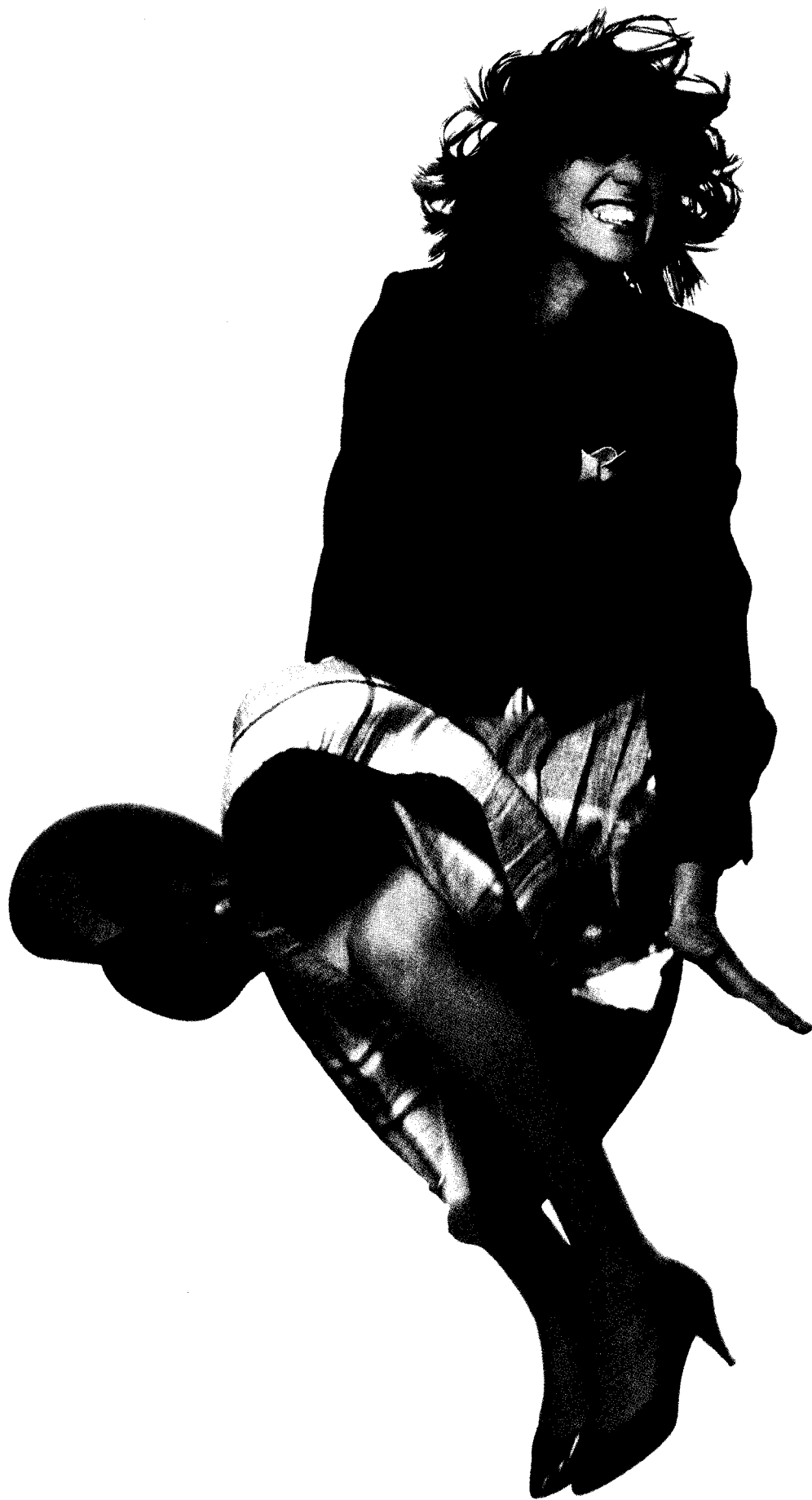
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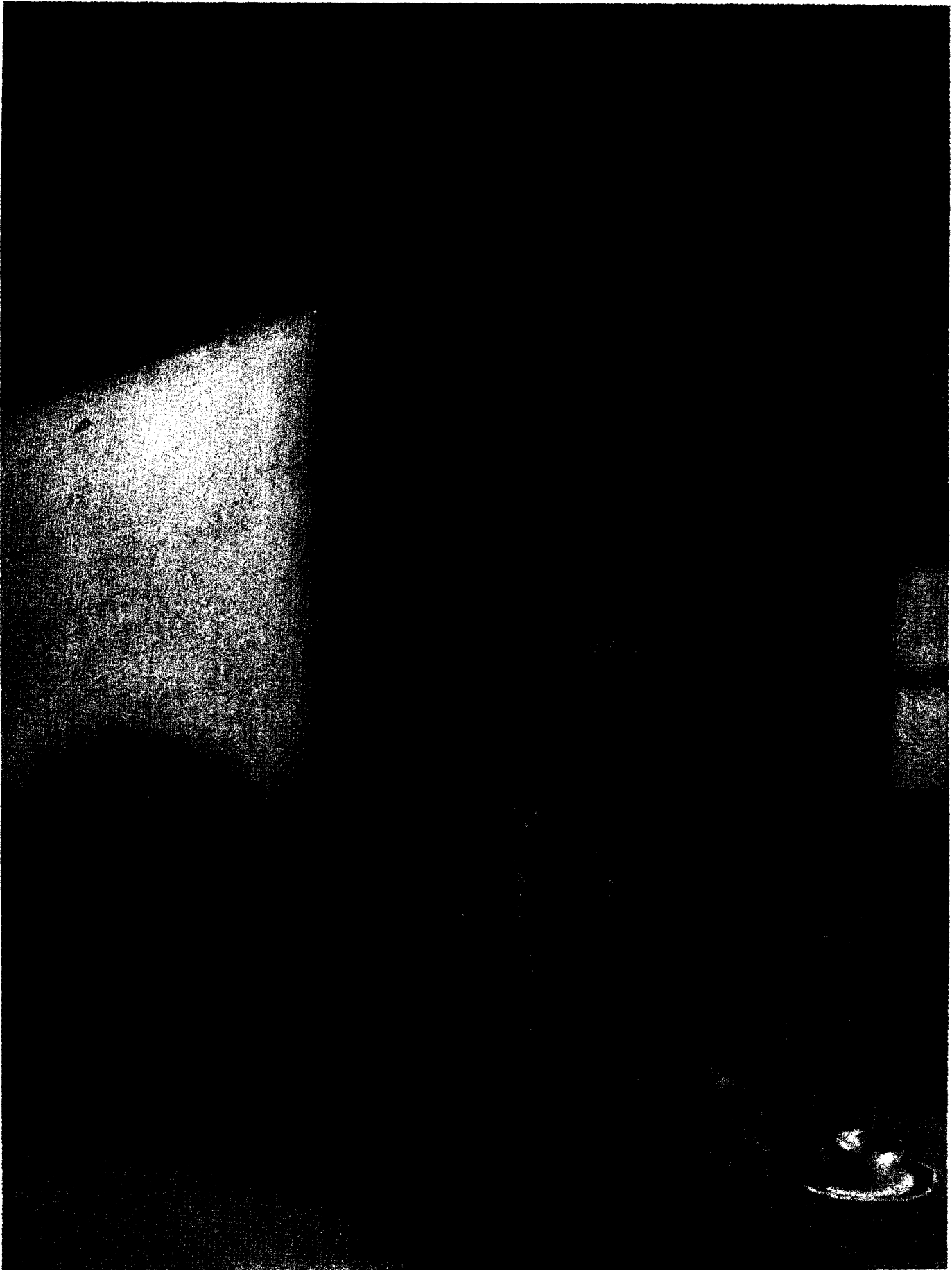


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A Short Story



SIGNS AND WONDERS

BY LESLEE BECKER

AS NEAR AS MARIAN RAYMER COULD TELL, SHE HAD taken a wrong turn somewhere. She had ended up on a narrow dirt road, hardly big enough to accommodate the car, her husband's flesh-colored Chrysler, which was equipped with everything but air-conditioning and which seemed to swell in the heat, rising over the shoulders of the road like a loaf of bread.

Although the day was very bright, everything had a sal-low, unburnished look. The trees, fields, even the small hills that rose shyly in the distance, were deprived of detail by the heat and dust that hung in the air, lapping at the car's open windows. The thought of turning back had entered Marian's mind, but there was no place to conduct such a maneuver and anyway she had no desire to go over the same road twice. She stopped the car and re-read the directions she had copied down the night before from the Cedar Rapids *Shopper's Guide* ad. She had been looking for an inexpensive exercycle, and when she found one in the Garage Sale section of the paper, she decided to go after it, even though that would involve a long trip. She left first thing in the morning, to get a jump on everyone else.

She hoped an exercise bike would help her take off the weight she had gained since her husband had died. The Weigh of Life hadn't worked. She had lost twelve pounds, but got discouraged with how long it took to lose enough to make a dramatic difference. She stopped attending Weigh of Life meetings and stopped buying the specially prepared food they sold to members. Now she was hungry all the time.

When her daughter, Heidi, came home for a visit, Marian put on five pounds. Heidi was twenty-three and had been hospitalized with a nervous condition, which Marian believed to be the result of poor nutrition. Heidi had lost weight rapidly, and whenever Marian visited her at the hospital, she arrived with shopping bags filled with food. Marian was heartbroken to see Heidi, looking pale and thin, surrounded by people with emotional disturbances who shuffled up and down the corridors and who probably ate all of her daughter's food. Marian had gone in for the psychological evaluation and had tried, for Heidi's sake, to remain cheerful while a team of doctors spoke to her in a

slow and deliberate way, as if she were incapable of understanding the peculiarities of the human mind. In her opinion, Heidi had experienced a mental episode, like those veterans who forget where they are, and she would be okay once the disturbed part of her got matched up with the true part of her.

Although Marian assured the doctors that she could take care of Heidi at home and see that she was not subjected to stressful situations, the doctors insisted that remaining in the hospital was in Heidi's best interest.

Marian couldn't sleep the evening after her discussion with the doctors. She wondered what she had done to make the doctors feel she was dangerous for her own daughter. She went over everything she had said at the meeting when she had described how happy Heidi had been as a child. On reflection, she realized that she had made a terrible mistake talking about Rhonda and Rory, Heidi's make-believe friends, to a bunch of people who spent too much time looking for something wrong in the canals of the mind when the real problem was one of nourishment. Doctors couldn't be trusted anyhow, she decided. They groped around for some affliction she had never heard of and talked about delayed grief as if it were something that came and went on schedule.

When they finally released Heidi and she was coming home, Marian went through the house and got rid of things that might make her daughter sad. She took down Gene's pictures and gave his clothes to a Goodwill store in another town. She fixed up Heidi's room with new wallpaper and curtains and converted the guest room into a studio for her.

She remembered standing in the doorway to the studio waiting for a sign of excitement to register on Heidi's face, the way it used to when she was surprised with presents. Marian had held open the paint box for Heidi and had felt suddenly foolish as Heidi described her plans to go to Boston for art classes and a museum job arranged by the hospital.

"Boston," Marian had said, closing the paint box. "Well, you always liked seafood."

A week later, as Marian drove home from the airport, she thought of all the things she could have told Heidi but didn't because she didn't want to upset her. Marian said nothing about the friends who, one by one, had dropped her at the first sign of real trouble, leaving her alone with the burden of two illnesses, first Gene's and then Heidi's.

Leslee Becker is a graduate of Hollins College and the University of Iowa Writers Workshop. She is currently a Wallace Stegner Writing Fellow at Stanford University and is working on a collection of short stories.

She felt as if something awful had come into her life—the way a tornado does, hovering for a time above the earth and then touching down mysteriously in one spot, wrenching everything apart there, leaving other people's homes untouched.

The day she had driven Gene back from the hospital, when they decided they could do nothing more for him, he talked about the wonderful people he had met. She had come down with a headache from the steady blast of the car heater, turned up as high as it would go because he was cold. She had felt sick to her stomach and stopped at a rest area, leaving him in the car with the engine running. She went into the women's room, and when she walked back outside she stopped for a moment by a truck. She heard the click of the cooling metal and felt the heat from its engine. She put her palm on the hood and wished she could leave everything behind, could simply climb up into the high cab and be driven off by a capable driver. Then she looked across the lot, saw Gene, small and frail, and returned to the car.

"Had to wait in line," she told him.

"Lot of people on the road today," he said. "Guess they want to get home before the snow." He glanced at the cars. "Everyone is buying smaller models now, but they're not as safe," he said as she pulled out. "Be sure to change the oil every three thousand."

He persuaded her, a month before he died, to drive in the dead of winter to a grotto. She remained in the car and watched him, dwarfed under his overcoat, as he stared at a fountain, a fist of ice protruding from its center. He left money in the collection box, and on the drive home, as he read a brochure, he told her about the man who had built the grotto, who had spent a lifetime filling it with objects of special significance.

"I've never seen so many things," Gene told her, his eyes brimming with tears. "You should have come inside, Marian. One whole wall is filled with dishes, and toys, too, stuck right there in the plaster. Those ordinary things look so different in there. This picture doesn't do it justice. They say there's this place called the Grotto of the Redemption, not far from us. Maybe we could go there sometime. Maybe we could make a nice trip of it, Marian." He smiled at her and placed his hand on her knee.

NOW, AS SHE SAT IN THE CAR, STARING AT THE sheet of directions, she wished someone would come along and help her. She was to have taken Sand Hill Road for twenty miles, but she had no way of telling which road she was on or how far she had traveled. If Gene had been the driver, he would have set the trip odometer, which he always did when he went somewhere. Sometimes he made a game of it, asking Marian and Heidi to guess the distance they had traveled. When they went to Florida, he drove right onto the beach and announced the exact number of miles between their house and the Atlantic Ocean.

Marian put the directions down and looked at her watch. She had been driving for more than an hour and was convinced that even if she found the garage sale, the exercycle would be gone. She pulled out, raising a plume of dust. The road narrowed, curved sharply, and climbed a hill, over which lay a canopy of trees. As soon as she was out in the open again, Marian felt the roar of heat. She pulled down the visor to block the sun, which had released itself from the hurdle of the trees and now stood overhead, surrounded by an apron of flabby clouds that marbled the sky, hanging low and still as if they longed to settle in a cooler place.

She began to feel the start of one of her hunger headaches, which announced itself with a dull pain over her right eye, and regretted skipping breakfast.

She came to a T in the road, saw a small sign dented with buckshot, and was astonished to discover that she had been going in the right direction all along. She glanced at the sheet of directions and turned south on Buena Vista Road.

She would have missed the house completely had it not been for a GARAGE SALE sign sticking out close to the road, with an arrow pointing to a small, dun-colored house that sat half under, half above the ground like a creature prevented from completing a higher stage of development. She followed a narrow dirt driveway and parked in front of a truck, its rear wheel sockets propped on cinder blocks, its front end pitched forward. The sign on the windshield said MAKE AN OFFER. She left her car and threaded her way through tall, dust-dulled grass, almost tripping over a rusty wheel rim in the middle of which some marigolds had been planted. She reached a path that sloped down like a chute, leading to the entrance of the house. As she stood near the screen door, she thought she heard TV voices, but when she peered inside, she could see no light. She heard a child's voice reciting along with a man, the child speaking slowly, as if she were repeating a lesson or learning a foreign language. Marian knocked and the child's voice stopped but the man's continued. He was telling a story about swine. She was about to knock again when she saw someone inside move.

"Turn it off, Monica," a woman's voice said.

Marian pressed her face to the screen door. A large woman suddenly appeared before her. She was wearing a blue chenille robe covered with stiff yellow dots that had once been flowers. Straight gray hair framed her face.

"I came for the garage sale, but I guess I'm too late," Marian said, stepping back from the door.

"Nope, you're the first one today," the woman said, looking over Marian's shoulder as if expecting others. The woman opened the door and Marian stepped inside, aware immediately of the darkness there and of the difference in temperature.

"Too much trouble to put everything outside. Thought I'd keep things in here, where it's cooler," the woman said.

When the woman turned on a lamp, Marian saw a girl in a chair turn her head slowly, like someone with a neck in-

jury. She had a round, full face, curly hair, and glasses that magnified her brown eyes. An awning of bangs jutted out from her forehead. The girl reached over the arm of the chair and punched a button on a cassette recorder.

"And nobody putteth a piece of raw cloth unto an old garment for it taketh away—"

"Turn it off, Monica," the woman said, raising her voice.

The girl turned the machine off, smiled at Marian, and continued to recite. "For it taketh away the fullness thereof from the garment, and there is made the greater rent."

"Monica's my granddaughter," the woman said. "She knows her Scripture."

"That's quite an accomplishment for a little girl. I'll bet that took a long time," Marian said, and then turned to the woman. "I thought I'd never find this place, but I followed my instincts, and here I am. Do you have an exercycle for sale?"

"In here," the woman answered, leading Marian down a hallway, past a room from which came a steady wheezing sound as if a piece of machinery were laboring to keep itself going. The woman opened a door at the end of the hall to a small room filled with boxes.

"It's practically brand new," the woman said, pointing to the bike, in the center of the room. "Got it for my husband."

The girl stepped around the boxes and climbed up on the bicycle seat. She pushed her glasses back up on her nose and began to pedal. "I went five miles yesterday," she said, pedaling fast and grinning.

"Get off it, Monica, so the lady can try it."

"No, that's all right. I'm sure it's in excellent condition. How much are you asking for it?" Marian said, hoping this wouldn't be one of those occasions on which the seller asks for an offer.

"Fifteen dollars," the woman announced. She was standing very close to Marian and looking directly into her eyes. "The seat's genuine leather, and it's still under warranty."

"See this?" Monica said, leaning over the seat and pointing to a knob. "You can adjust this thing to make it pedal hard or easy. Right now it's set on as hard as it'll go."

"I'll probably have to work my way up to that harder gear. I'm going to take the bike," Marian said, opening her purse. "I don't have anything smaller than a twenty."

"Got a real bike for sale too. Why don't you look around?" the woman said, taking the money. "It's all for sale, 'cept what we got boxed up." She pointed to the boxes. "They contain our keepsakes."

"Yes," Marian said. "A person can certainly accumulate quite a bit in a lifetime."

"Go in my billfold, Monica," the woman said, handing the girl the twenty. "There's some ones and change, and bring in those cookies and that cream soda."

Monica took the money and left the room. "We'll help you haul it out to your car when you're ready to go," the woman said.

"I really should be getting on my way," Marian said, wishing this were a regular garage sale, with other people around. She followed the woman down the hall, hearing again a sound in another room, this time a low guttural sound, like water rushing through a pipe. "I better not look around. You know how it is at sales. You go after one thing and in no time you end up buying lots of items you don't even need." She smiled, and the woman looked back at her with a puzzled expression.

Marian returned to the living room, and as she waited for her change she stood in front of a maroon sofa, staring at a painting that appeared to depict a crowd of people huddled in the desert. On closer inspection she realized it was a herd of cattle heading west.

"That's three dollars," the woman said.

"It's very peaceful," Marian said, sitting down with the woman on the sofa, which felt damp on her legs and released a faint musty smell.

"Coffee table's five, and I'm willing to let this couch go for twenty." The woman ran her hand over the fabric and then punched the cushion in a movement so quick and unexpected that it startled Marian.

"It's been in the family a long time," the woman said.

"They don't make them as sturdy as this anymore," Marian said, "but I'm afraid I just can't use another stick of furniture."

The dull ache that had begun over her right eye had become a steady throb, aggravated, Marian was certain, by the temperature extremes and by the lack of fresh air.

She felt relieved when Monica returned. The girl was carrying a tray, which she placed on the coffee table. Then she sat in a chair across from Marian.

"We expected a lot of people," the woman said, as she leaned over the mound of cookies. "You need any silverware or kitchen appliances?"

"No, I'm all set in that area, but I can see that you have many fine things for sale here," Marian said, looking around the room. On the wall across from her were family pictures and one of Jesus standing in a boat. He looked too thin to her, and his wavy blond hair and exactly fitting robe made him appear artificial.

"We're packing the pictures last," the woman said. "Help yourself to them cookies," she added, holding the tray up to Marian.

"I'm trying to watch my weight, but they certainly look tempting. I guess with the bike I can burn up a few calories," Marian said, reaching for a cookie. She was about to bite into it when she heard pounding coming from another room.

"Go see what your grandfather wants, Monica."

The girl sighed, grabbed a handful of cookies, and left the room.

"That's my husband, Leonard," the woman said, leaning toward Marian. "He has trouble talking. Had major surgery twice on his throat for the cancer."

"Oh," Marian said. She put the cookie down and picked up an ashtray.

"I could let that go for fifty cents. A lighter goes with it. It don't work, but it's real pretty. You want to see it?"

"No, thank you," Marian said, hearing the pounding grow louder. "I appreciate your hospitality, but I have to go." She stood up quickly and felt light-headed and weak.

"You can't leave yet," the woman said, holding her arm. Marian sat back down. "You don't have your change back. See that panther on top of the TV? It's got a light in it. We're selling everything."

"I just came for the bike," Marian said, wishing she had never entered the house. It was exactly the kind of place Gene had had to visit on his insurance route. He had spent hours with people like this, sometimes taking Heidi along with him, staying for dinner and coming home late, describing it to Marian as a wonderful experience.

"What'd he want?" the woman said when Monica returned, holding a rag doll by its neck in one hand and a shoe box in the other.

"Nothin'," the girl said.

"I got to see to him," the woman said, rising from the sofa. "Give the lady her change, Monica."

The girl sat next to Marian, counted out the change, and began to thump her heels against the sofa.

"She has to clean his tube," Monica said, smiling. "Twice a day."

EARLIER IN THE DAY MARIAN WOULD HAVE SAID THAT the worst situation possible would be her car's breaking down on a back road. Now, as she sat in the damp room, with the girl's heels drumming against the sofa, with her own head ringing with pain, and with an uncertain stomach, she knew that the worst that could happen was happening—coming down with a sick headache in an underground house where someone was dying. She leaned back against the cushion, wondering how she would ever get home again. She was glad Heidi wasn't there to witness a situation certain to make her upset again.

"Monica," she said, trying to smile, "could you tell your grandmother that I have to be going?"

The girl looked at her, remained silent for a moment, and then slid off the sofa.

Marian reached into her purse for her headache medicine and took a capsule with the cream soda. She placed the can over her right temple and closed her eyes. She heard whispers and then a whirring sound, shrill and close, and then a click.

"And behold they cried out," a man's voice announced.

Marian opened her eyes. Across from her Monica was holding the cassette recorder, moving her lips in sync with the words. "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, son of God? Art thou come hither to torment before the time?"

"Monica," Marian said, reaching toward her.

Monica turned off the recorder and grinned. "And there

was not far from them," she said, "an herd of many swine feeding, and the devil besought them, saying, 'If thou cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine.' And he said to them, 'Go.' But they going out went into the herd of swine, and behold the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters."

As Marian listened to the story, she felt herself sinking into the deep sofa, seeing the pigs as if she were in the pen with them, unable to escape.

"My granddaddy likes that story," Monica said, "and whenever I finish it, he always asks who's going to replace those hogs. He used to raise 'em. He don't give a hoot about the other stuff." She put her face up close to Marian's. "You're sick too, aren't you?"

She lifted the rag doll over Marian's head. "This is Burt, and I wouldn't sell him for anything." Then she put the doll down and knelt next to the sofa. "Wanna see what I got in here?" she asked, lifting the lid off the shoe box. When Marian leaned forward, seeing nothing in the box but a bunch of badges, marbles, and a watch, her headache banged against her eyes, and she felt queasy.

"Those items aren't for sale," the woman said, as she entered the room. "Put those back, Monica."

"Uh-oh, Burt, we're in for it now," Monica said, replacing the box lid. "The lady's sick, Gram."

"I get these headaches sometimes," Marian said, putting the heel of her hand on her right temple. "I should have done something as soon as I felt the warning signs. It always starts over one eye, and then it spreads. I should have done something earlier."

The woman removed one of the back sofa cushions and laid it on the armrest. "You just lie down a while," she said.

Marian looked up at her. "I can't," she said, shaking her head. "I should go."

When she tried to rise, the woman grasped her hand. "You just lie down now. Go get the afghan, Monica." She helped Marian lie back against the cushion, and when Marian tried to protest, the woman brought her finger up to Marian's lip. "There now, you're no bother at all."

Monica returned with the afghan, and the woman placed it over Marian, arranging it around her legs and shoulders. "That's a comfortable couch, isn't it?" the woman asked. Marian nodded. "You ever try putting potato peels over your eyes? They say it works every time."

Marian shook her head. "I have some prescription medicine. I took that."

"I'll make you some tea."

"No, thank you. I'll just wait till my stomach settles, and then I'll be on my way."

"You just relax now," the woman said, "and we'll put that bicycle in the car for you. Come on, Monica. Let's leave the lady be. She don't feel good."

"I know that, Gram," the girl said, following her grandmother out of the room.

Marian closed her eyes. She heard whispering in the hallway, and then a screen door opened and closed. Flies thudded against the windows, and outside a plane sawed

away at the sky and crickets strummed in the grass, the sounds all vivid and close as though she were hearing everything for the first time.

When a man's voice cried out, and was followed by a deep moaning sound, she felt herself struggling to get up to go to him but being held back by a heavy weight that lay across her chest. It was Gene, pleading to her to come to him, making her feel she was going through the whole thing again, as if she hadn't gotten it right the first time.

She heard the screen door again, and then, from the next room, the woman's humming, the man's sobs growing softer. When she opened her eyes and looked across the room, she saw the curtains move in and out against the window, stippling the thin beam of afternoon sun that appeared at the top of the pane.

Monica was sitting next to the sofa. She held a red Bible on her lap, letting her fingers fall on pages that she read to herself, nodding, as if she had found passages that pertained to Marian and was keeping them secret. Then Monica's hand touched something in the book which she pulled out, stared at for a moment, and then presented to Marian.

"That's my daddy," she said, holding a photograph near Marian's eyes.

Marian looked at it and put her hand to her heart. It was a photograph of a young man lying in a casket. He was dressed in a Marine uniform, and he held a crucifix in his gloved hands.

"I told you to leave the lady be," the woman said, coming into the room. She took the photograph from the girl, brushed it with the edge of her robe, and returned it to the Bible. "Leonard took that picture. Guess he didn't know what else to do at the time. Monica shouldn't have bothered you with that, you being sick and all."

"It's not as bad as it was," Marian said, sitting up. "Is that your son, that picture?"

"Carey," the woman said, nodding.

"Such a handsome boy," Marian said, feeling as soon as she did that she had said something foolish.

"He died at home. Came back for his furlough. They were going to send him overseas, and he came home and got himself in a wreck. Went right through the guardrails and landed on a rock in the middle of a field. Wasn't but one rock in that whole place, and my boy landed on it. Leonard never could get over it. He took a picture of the car, too."

"I know where it is, Gram. Want me to show it to the lady?"

"No, you sit still," the woman said. "This poor lady's got her own share of trouble. I got something for you." The woman patted Marian's arm.

As she watched the woman get up to leave the room, Marian wanted to say something to her, but before she could think of anything appropriate to say, the woman was gone. Marian smiled at Monica, and the girl stared back as she ran her fingers over the Bible pages.

THE WOMAN RETURNED CARRYING A TRAY, WHICH she placed on the table in front of Marian. It held a silver tea set that looked recently polished. Next to flowered china cups and saucers the woman had carefully arranged a creamer and a small sugar bowl with scrolled tongs, and she had laid out three spoons on blue cloth napkins.

"Don't get a chance to use this much," the woman said as she poured the tea. "You help yourself to what you want."

"Thank you," Marian said. She drank some tea and felt, for the first time in the house, warmer.

"We're going to Tulsa, Oklahoma," Monica said, putting a sugar cube in her mouth.

"Her mother lives there," the woman said. "Got herself a job with the telephone company, and now we're going out to live with her. She's got a place big enough for all of us. She's the one who told us about Little Nelson."

"Little Nelson," Monica repeated, as she stroked her doll.

"You ever seen him on the TV?" the woman asked.

Marian shook her head.

"Get those papers they sent us, Monica."

When the girl left the room, the woman leaned toward Marian. "Monica wasn't but one year old when her daddy died. She don't hardly remember him at all."

"I do too," Monica said, returning with a manila envelope, which she handed to her grandmother.

"He wrote me a personal letter," the woman said, extracting a paper from the envelope. "'Dear Alma Neal Tavin,' it says, 'I am with you in your hour of need.'" She stopped reading, stared at the letter for a moment, and took out a photograph, which she showed to Marian. It was a glossy picture of a little boy with curly blond hair. He was wearing a white three-piece suit and sandals, and he was standing on a box with his eyes uplifted. Marian knew right away that it was a touched-up photograph; the boy's cheeks and lips looked pink and unnatural.

"He looks bigger on the TV," the woman said. "His hair's white and fine, just like that stuff you put on Christmas trees."

"We've got an artificial Christmas tree for sale," Monica said. "It's blue."

"This lady's already got what she come for, Monica."

"Tell her about Little Nelson's condition, Gram."

The woman pointed to the photograph. "How old do you think he is?"

Marian stared at the picture. "Seven or eight," she answered.

"Ha," Monica said, grinning. "You're way off."

"His actual age is eighteen," the woman said, "but he don't look it, does he? He's got something that stopped his growth short. The same affliction as those little black boys on the TV."

As Marian looked at the picture, she wondered about Little Nelson's mother, if she was glad that her son stayed small.

"Little Nelson's a healer," the woman said. "Maybe he could take care of your condition."

"No, I don't think so," Marian said. She put her cup down and looked at her watch.

"He cured a lady of sugar diabetes," the woman said, pouring more tea in Marian's cup. "Would have had her leg cut off if it weren't for him. He can pick out stuff from people in the audience. We've seen him."

Monica put her hand on the doll's leg, closed her eyes, and screwed her face into a pained expression. "And all that were sick He healed that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken to the prophet Isaiah, saying, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' I see bleeding," Monica said, clasping the doll to her and squinting at Marian. "Wait. Is it from the belly? Yes. Yes. Someone in the congregation here tonight's got a stomach disorder. I see walls of blood. Someone here among us is suffering from a bleeding stomach. Don't you be afraid now, no sir. We got Him on our side, and we're going to give that ol' Satan a black eye. Someone's hurting. You come on down now." Monica giggled.

"Monica's aiming on becoming a preacher."

"A TV minister, Grandma," the girl said, sighing.

"We don't know if she's got the gift, but we're going to Tulsa. Selling everything we got. Already pledged our money to Little Nelson. Leonard don't know about it. Wherever he is, it's all the same to him. He don't believe in nothing but bad luck. Gave up after Carey died, and now all that stored-up anger's turned itself into a cancer."

Marian felt a shooting pain in her chest. She wanted to warn the woman about getting her hopes up. She imagined some outfit in Tulsa, Oklahoma, taking this woman's money, taking in money from all kinds of desperate people down on their luck.

"You don't know," Marian said, and then stopped herself. "You can get cancer from anything."

"That's what they say," the woman said. "I'm fifty-six years old, and I never had a sick day in my life. I thank God for it."

Marian was shocked that the woman was younger than she was. "You don't look it. You don't look your age," she said.

"Are you a married woman?" the woman asked, leaning toward Marian and lowering her voice, as if she wanted to reveal some secret.

Marian avoided her eyes. "Yes," she said, looking up at the window.

Monica moved her chair closer to the sofa, and the woman settled back, an expectant look on her face.

"Yes, I'm married," Marian said, looking at Monica, "and I have a girl too."

Monica smiled at her.

"Her name is Heidi. Gene, that's my husband, he let me have the name. He was all for calling her Irma, after his own mother, but I couldn't imagine a child with that name. Gene called her Babe. She was her father's little girl, all

right. She went everywhere with him. She's got curly hair, just like you, Monica."

"That's a home permanent," the woman said. "It's what she wanted for her birthday."

"I wanted a Cabbage Patch doll, too, but I didn't get it."

"Heidi liked trucks and guns. A real tomboy. She was her father's little girl, all right."

The woman moved in closer to Marian. "She's departed, hasn't she? I knew there was something about you. I felt the connection right off."

"Oh, no," Marian said. "She lives in Boston. I've got a picture of her." She reached for her purse and took out a picture of Heidi at seven. "Such a good little girl, always sunny. Gene spoiled her. Gave her everything she ever wanted."

"What's he do?" the woman asked, looking at the picture.

"He's in sales," Marian said.

"Leonard's done that too. Sold snowmobiles, chain saws, and for a while he worked for John Deere."

"He raised hogs, too," Monica said.

"My husband's retired now, and we're thinking of living closer to Heidi—and our grandchildren," Marian added, as an afterthought. "Twins. A boy and a girl. Rhonda and Rory."

MARIAN HAD BEGUN TO FEEL BETTER. HER HEADACHE was letting up, and she felt relaxed. She looked at the woman, who was staring at the photograph of Heidi.

"Of course, it broke Gene's heart that Heidi moved so far away. She teaches art and paints, too. Gene was always telling her that lots of painters found plenty of inspiration right here. Why, he even fixed up an art studio for her right in our home. It's just not the same anymore with her living all the way out there on the East Coast."

The woman handed the picture back to Marian. "I've never been to either side of the country. Lived in the middle all my life. Yes, it's a sad thing when your family gets separated, but they got to have their own lives to live."

Marian remained silent for a moment and then nodded. A small pool of sunlight unfurled slowly in the center of the floor by her feet and then disappeared.

"I wanted the exercycle so I could lose weight before I see my daughter again," Marian said. "Gene, well, you know men, they don't care one way or the other, but I don't want to let my appearance go." Marian glanced at the woman and at Monica, both of whom looked disappointed.

When the man began to bang on the wall in the next room, Monica closed her eyes. "I see pain. I see blockage," she said, frowning.

"Ssh, Monica," the woman said.

The pounding continued, and the woman seemed to be waiting for Marian to say something more.

"Of course," Marian said, raising her voice, "we've

known our share of hardship. Gene, he's not well himself, but we've kept it from Heidi."

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children forever," Monica pronounced, lifting her hand to her eyes. "I see deep pain."

The man called out for the woman. She stood up. "I got to see to him."

Marian got up from the sofa.

"You don't have to go," the woman said.

"Yes. I feel so much better," Marian said. "I don't know how to thank you."

The pounding grew louder, as if at any moment the man would break through the wall.

"You tell your friends, now, that we've got plenty to sell here. You think you can get home all right?"

Marian nodded, and the woman began to walk away.

"Wait," Marian said. The woman turned around and looked at her. "I've been thinking about what I said before. Well, maybe I could use some things after all. I admired that tea set very much. I'd like to buy it."

"That's one of our keepsakes," the woman said. She smiled at Marian. "You try those potato peels next time your head hurts, and tell your husband about Little Nelson."

"Yes, I will," Marian said, watching the woman walk down the hallway.

Monica followed Marian to the door. "I'm never going to get married," she said. "I'm special, just like Little Nelson."

Marian turned around, smiled at the girl, and patted her on the head.

"Yes," she said. "You're a very special little girl."

Monica blushed and lowered her head. "I've never been on a jet plane before," she whispered, moving closer to Marian.

"Everything will be all right, Monica—there's nothing to worry about," Marian said, putting her arms around the girl.

"Monica," the woman shouted, "come help me with your grandfather."

Monica raised her head and stepped back. When Marian reached toward her, Monica took a deep breath, put her hands on her hips, and stared fiercely at Marian. "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known," she recited. "What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops." Then she swiveled around and ran down the hall.

MARIAN STOOD STILL NEAR THE DOOR AND THEN went outside, at once feeling the heat, which lay liquid and thick in the air. The sky was pale yellow, as if all the accumulated dust had ascended and attached itself there. She got into the car, and as she backed down the driveway she saw Monica waving to her from the screen door.

The rain began as she crested the hill, loud drops blistering the car. She turned on the windshield wipers and headlights and was descending the hill when something white and sudden swooped down in front of the car. When she swerved to the right, it disappeared.

She stopped, left the car, and looked at the hood and the road, but she saw nothing. Then she stared at the woods and saw, perched on a large boulder, a white owl. Beneath its feet lay a small bird, whose scapular was twisted under the owl's talons. The owl fixed its gaze upon Marian and bent its head slowly. Its broad wings began to unfurl, their tips folding gently over the bird, which struggled briefly, stopped, and then raised its head. In a sudden flap of wings the owl ascended, carrying the bird aloft over the tops of the trees, and vanished.

Marian stared at the rock, at the fury of feathers left there, and felt betrayed, as she had felt on waking from the dreams she'd had after Gene died, when, for a time in her sleep, he was still with her.

She returned to the car and thought of Heidi, and wondered if she had the same kind of dreams. And she thought about the people back at the house, going through everything she had gone through. She imagined them lost and bewildered in airports; the man, frail and sickly, being wheeled through noisy buildings teeming with strangers, no one caring about them or their keepsakes. She thought of the unexpected china, the delicate silver tongs, and the people themselves, sharing everything with her. She felt a deep and warm surge of pain, but she did not cry.

She started the car, and as she made her way down the road, the sky began to clear. The air felt cooler, and Marian realized that the countryside looked entirely different. The trees seemed vivid and bright, restored to a rich greenness, and the road itself seemed safer.

I've got an exercise bike, she thought, suddenly aware that she had gone all day without food.

She decided that she would call Heidi as soon as she returned home. She would tell her about the day, about the strange people she had met. She would talk about them the way Gene always had, telling every detail of the experience, as if he had discovered, in a mysterious place in the country, something he wanted to share, like an offering, with others. □

The Lights Go On...

The lights go on and on. You've seen them from far above... soft sparkles of golden light shining out from the middle of nowhere... unfolding out of the velvety darkness... stretching on for miles and miles and miles.

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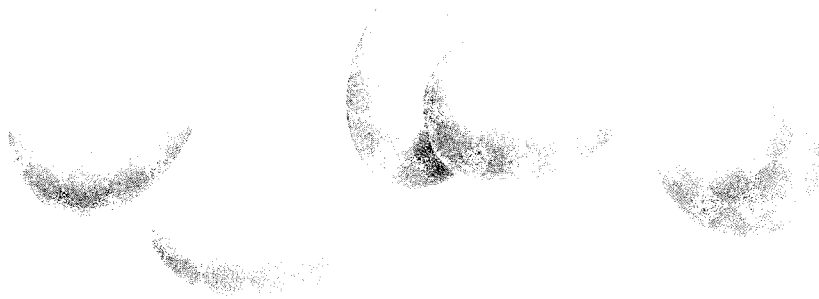
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A revisionist look at farm policy

MAKING SENSE OF AGRICULTURE

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK



AMERICANS ARE INCLINED TO THINK OF A CRISIS AS A shortage, but agriculture is in crisis because of surpluses—too much of a good thing. Farmers in the United States produce more food than their countrymen need or want; and although they do not produce as much as the hungry world needs, they produce far more than it can afford to buy. This has been the case ever since the Depression. Indeed, overproduction was a problem even during the Depression, and it has become unusually pronounced in the 1980s, as many Western countries and even a few developing nations have joined the United States in growing more food than anyone knows what to do with. The result is a tragedy of plenty, which offends many of our deepest convictions about resources, virtue, and the soil. One way or another, most of the confusion in American agricultural policy today arises from our reluctance to accept the idea that growing food is sometimes the wrong thing to do.

Few economic endeavors have any aura of romance and tradition. We don't get misty at the sight of a chain store framed against a prairie landscape or take comfort in knowing that each morning thousands of lawyers head out into the predawn darkness to tend their lawsuits. Farming, though, occupies an honored place in our culture. Even big-city sophisticates who would sooner die than attend a Grange Hall dance find it reassuring to know that somewhere out there honest folk are working the earth much as it has been worked for centuries.

Agricultural industries, from farming itself to the retailing of farm products, constitute the largest sector of the American economy, accounting for 20 percent of the GNP and employing more people than the steel and automobile industries combined. Yet many people find it heartless and

somehow unfair for anyone to speak of farming as an industry subject to the logic of supply and demand. To this sentimental faction the thought that any farmer should have to go out of business seems intolerable. As the cost of federal agricultural subsidies has risen, there has come into being an opposing faction, which dismisses farmers as spoiled welfare dependents who bilk the public on an unprecedented scale. Last winter's campaign for an emergency farm-credit bill seemed to divide politicians and the press into two camps: those who would "give 'em whatever they want" and those who would "let 'em fry."

The actual circumstances of modern farming conform to few if any of the assumptions that underlie the public debate. In order to see what condition American agriculture is in, one must first dispatch a number of widely held misconceptions.

—Farm families as a group are not poor. Their average income in 1983, one of the worst years in memory for agriculture, was \$21,907. The average income for all families was \$24,580. If one takes into account the lower cost of living in rural areas, farmers live about as well as other Americans. In fact, in some recent years farmers earned more than the national average.

—Farmers are not being driven from the land. From October of 1984 through January of 1985—when what was said to be a dire emergency for farmers was making news—the Farmers Home Administration actually foreclosed on forty-two farms nationwide. The FmHA provides loans to farmers who can't get credit elsewhere. Over the same four-month period its borrowers who "discontinued farming due to financial difficulties"—a broad category that reflects foreclosures by lienholders, bankruptcies, and voluntary liquidations to avert bankruptcy—totaled 1,249, or 0.5 percent of the FmHA's 264,000 clients.

From January to September of 1984 production-credit

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associations and federal land banks under the aegis of the Farm Credit Administration (which is much larger than the FmHA, handling about a third of U.S. agricultural debt) actually foreclosed on 2,908 loans nationwide. If one includes bankruptcies and loans in the process of liquidation, a total of 1.6 percent of FCA-aided farmers were in trouble.

Debt problems are real: early this year the FmHA, FCA-backed institutions, and rural farm banks saw delinquency rates reach record highs. But the incidence of dispossessions has been vastly exaggerated. The number of delinquent loans usually peaks early in the year, because most FmHA loans come due in January. Newspapers rarely follow up their winter reports of a "dramatic increase" in the number of farms in trouble with summer reports of a dramatic decline.

—Farming is not a disastrous investment. Farm lobbyists don't like to talk about disposable income, preferring to speak of "profit"—a problematic concept when applied to the self-employed, who can treat as business expenses items like vehicles and real estate, which most others must pay for out of their salaries. In 1983 and 1984 a trillion dollars' worth of farm assets generated a profit of \$48 billion—an average return of 2.4 percent a year. But the annual net return on all corporate assets for the same period was only 5.5 percent.

—The "farm exodus" has been over for years. Much is made of the fact that the number of U.S. farms declined by 33,000 in 1982 and by 31,000 in 1983. But the declines were far bigger in the 1950s and 1960s—a period enshrined in political mythology as better for farmers. In 1951 the number of farms declined by 220,000; in 1956 by 140,000; in 1961 by 138,000.

—Agribusiness does not dominate farming. Only three percent of all U.S. farms are owned by corporations. Moreover, farm ownership is not becoming increasingly concentrated. About one percent of all owners of farmland hold 30 percent of farm acreage, but that ratio is the same as it was in 1946.

—Most agricultural products are not eligible for federal support. Federal programs concentrate on what are called basic crops—grains, cotton, rice, and dairy products. Fruits, vegetables, livestock, and specialty crops, such as nuts and garlic, are not subsidized. In recent years these products have often done better than the ones the government takes an interest in—a circumstance that some commentators view as proof that abolishing government programs would solve agriculture's problems. Right now, however, the two categories of farm products are in about the same depth of trouble.

—Most farmers don't get subsidies. Participation in the basic crop-subsidy programs is voluntary, and most farmers stay away. A study released in 1984 by the Senate Budget Committee found that the major subsidy programs covered only 21 percent of farms and 16.5 percent of farm acreage.

Those whose response to the increasing cost of agricul-

tural programs is that we should continue the subsidies for small farmers but prevent large farmers from enjoying them should take note that the programs already function pretty much that way. The Senate Budget Committee study found that the largest farms were the least likely to be enrolled in subsidy programs. The most direct cash subsidy, called deficiency payments, is capped at \$50,000 per farm per year, which renders the program of little value to large operations. Indeed, the one percent of owners controlling 30 percent of American farm acreage received only seven percent of the deficiency payments in 1983, and almost none of the FmHA and Small Business Administration benefits.

—No one can get rich on federal subsidies. While a very large amount of money is spent subsidizing U.S. agriculture, it is spread so thin that few individual farmers receive significant amounts. Indiana farmers averaged \$1,323 in federal cash payments in 1982; Kansas farmers averaged \$1,577; figures in the rest of the heartland were about the same. In Arizona, where farmers receive by far the highest subsidies in the country, direct payments averaged \$27,040. Farmers benefit from a variety of other subsidies, the per capita amounts of which are difficult to calculate but clearly not lavish.

—Most farmers don't have burdensome debt. President Reagan was wrong to say that "around four percent at best" of farmers need credit help, but the actual figure is not much higher. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) which farm-spending advocates often cite, only 6.5 percent of all farmers are actually insolvent or on the verge of being so. The Federal Reserve System estimates that eight percent of farmers have debt-asset ratios over 70 percent, and another 11 percent have debt-asset ratios of 41 to 70 percent. But nearly 58 percent of all farmers are well in the clear, with debt-asset ratios of 10 percent or less.

From the impersonal standpoint of economics, the 19 percent of farmers who, according to the Federal Reserve, are in credit trouble might be viewed as representing agriculture's excess production capacity. Last year 81 percent of the production capacity of all U.S. industries was in use, leaving 19 percent idle. Looked at this way, the share of borderline cases in farming is not particularly different from that in other industries.

—Debt has hit farmers hard but not that hard. From 1974 to 1984 outstanding agricultural debt rose 193 percent. Through the same period consumer credit rose 172 percent, mortgage debt rose 167 percent, and all commercial bank debt rose 153 percent.

—The embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union did not clobber wheat farmers. In 1980, the year the embargo was in full effect, agricultural exports jumped from \$31 billion to \$40 billion—the largest increase ever. Wheat exports increased from 1,375 million bushels in 1979 to 1,514 million in 1980 and increased again in 1981, to 1,771 million bushels. In 1982 and 1983, after the embargo was lifted, wheat exports declined.



JUST ENOUGH TO BE MISERABLE

FARM GROUPS, FROM THE RADICAL AMERICAN Agriculture Movement to the rock-ribbed conservative American Farm Bureau Federation, condemn federal agricultural programs as a matter of ritual, and nearly every congressional hearing on agriculture commences with a rendition of how horribly the government treats the farmer. This is partly because agricultural programs are a philosophical jumble. Containing elements of free-market risk and federal bailouts, capitalist entrepreneurship and socialist central planning, they do not reinforce anyone's world view.

Consumers might say, Don't knock success. U.S. agriculture not only produces an abundance of nutritious food but does so at low consumer prices. Americans spend a smaller percentage of their disposable income on food than do the citizens of any other industrial nation; in the past ten years, as the Consumer Price Index has risen by 114 percent, supermarket prices have risen by only 96 percent. Even when the cost of subsidies—which consumers must pay too, through their taxes—is taken into account, food remains cheap. If the roughly \$21 billion being spent in this fiscal year to subsidize agriculture were reflected directly in consumer costs, supermarket prices would be only about six percent higher than they are.

Some farmers dislike federal programs because they don't want the government interfering with their lives, and others dislike the programs because they wish the government would interfere more. The range of opinion is not hard to understand. Farm subsidies provide just enough money to keep nearly every farmer in business producing just enough excess supply to hold prices down. This means that farmers who depend on government subsidies will find it hard to become prosperous enough to do without them. It also means that farmers who aren't subsidized get lower prices than they would if no one was subsidized. Everybody works, but everybody is miserable.

The main subsidy programs are deficiency payments and loans, both of which are administered by the Commodity Credit Corporation. Deficiency payments are straightforward. The farmer simply gets in the mail a check for the difference between the market price and a target price, which is set by Congress. A CCC loan is more involved. A farmer borrows a sum calculated by the government to reflect the value of his crop, and he puts up the crop itself as collateral. The loan is like a salary. If the market price turns out to be higher than the loan rate, the farmer can sell the crop, satisfy the loan, and keep the pre-

mium. If the market price is not higher than the loan rate, the farmer activates a "nonrecourse clause" and turns over the crop—the collateral—to close out his obligation. In effect he has forced the government to buy his product.

The cost of agricultural subsidies is difficult to predict. For example, when the farm bill expiring this year (which covers almost all agricultural subsidies) was passed, in 1981, its cost was estimated at \$11 billion. Because lawmakers assumed that inflation, running hot in 1981, would continue through the lifetime of the bill, they programmed in large annual increases in loan rates and target prices. Instead inflation cooled, the recession held agricultural exports down, market prices wavered, and loan rates and target prices ended up being higher in relation to market prices than expected. As a result, instead of a total of \$11 billion since 1981 the legislation has cost \$53 billion. This fiscal year alone the outlay for CCC purchases and deficiency payments is expected to reach \$14.2 billion.

In theory the subsidy system combats overproduction, because farmers who "seal" their crops with the CCC must agree to leave idle a percentage of their acreage. But in practice it can backfire. Eligibility is based on acreage: the more acres a farmer has available for production, the more generous his subsidy can be. Thus farmers sodbust land neither needed nor efficient, solely to get credit for the acreage. And nothing in the program prevents farmers from increasing production, by using more fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery, on land they are not required to idle. It is not unusual for a farm's output to go up in a year in which acreage has been set aside to please the CCC.

Next in dollar value are subsidized loans from the Farmers Home Administration. In this fiscal year the FmHA is spending about \$3 billion for below-market operating loans (loans that pay for seed, fertilizer, and so on). Originally the FmHA was to provide only temporary assistance, but now many recipients stay in the system year after year. (When the first federal price-support program was created, in 1933, the secretary of agriculture, Henry Wallace, called it a "temporary method of dealing with an emergency.") The emergency farm-credit bill that monopolized the attention of Congress early this year was, like most agricultural assistance, portrayed as a one-time extraordinary measure. There was also an emergency farm-credit bill in 1984, and, barring some miracle, there will have to be another in 1986.)

FmHA assistance is available only to farmers who have already been turned down by commercial banks or production-credit associations. The 264,000 farmers kept in business by the FmHA represent only 11 percent of a total 2.4 million. Yet 11 percent can make all the difference in the marketplace. For example, in commodity markets like those for grain, oil, and gold, where products have no distinguishing features and only numbers count, often the final few percentage points—what economists call the marginal supply—sway the price for all producers. OPEC's Arab members set world oil prices for almost a decade though they produced about a third of the world's oil. Oil

was in tight supply, it was a seller's market, and all oil became worth what OPEC was charging, because any seller knew that he could find a buyer willing to pay the marginal price. Now there is a buyer's market for oil, and the OPEC price can no longer be enforced.

Likewise, in 1972, the year of the first major Russian grain purchase (the "Great Grain Robbery"), U.S. wheat prices zoomed from \$1.76 a bushel to \$3.95. The Russian acquisition totaled just 22 percent of the wheat available on U.S. markets that year, and by December there was more surplus grain in our stockpiles than the Soviets had bought. But the marginal supply had been carried away and the market converted from a buyer's to a seller's domain. By the same token, a moderate percentage of extra supply can depress prices, by robbing sellers (farmers) of their bargaining leverage. In 1981, for example, the corn harvest increased by 22 percent while domestic consumption and exports—or, as the USDA calls it, total "disappearance"—declined slightly. As a result, corn prices fell from \$3.11 a bushel to \$2.50.

Overproduction becomes acute in the basic crop categories, because one year's mistakes are stored and added to those of the next. In 1981 U.S. fields produced a record 15.6 million bales of cotton, but only 11.8 million "disappeared." Leftovers from 1981 have been plaguing the cotton market ever since. In 1983, for example, cotton production was down to 7.7 million bales and demand was up to 12.7 million, but because the year began with eight million bales in storage, cotton supply still exceeded demand by almost 25 percent. Today the price of cotton is about what it was in 1976, with no adjustment for inflation, and it's below what some growers spend on production.

When foreign demand falls off, the cumulative effects of overproduction become especially painful. Roughly four out of ten acres are planted for foreign sale. Since the early 1970s wheat producers have been serving the foreign market first and the U.S. market as a sideline; in the record years of 1980 and 1981 twice as many bushels were shipped overseas as were used at home. If foreign customers fail to buy, as has lately been the case, there's nowhere for the crops to go but into storage, because the United States already has all the food it needs. Even drastic price cuts would produce at best only a slight increase in U.S. consumption (food generally being subject to what economists call inelastic demand: most buyers want about the same amount regardless of variations in price). Soybean growers produced 2,035 million bushels last year and sold 1,880 million, leaving 155 million in silos. Export demand, which had peaked at 929 million bushels in 1981, was down to 800 bushels. Had export demand stayed at the 1981 level, 1984 would have been a banner year for soybean farming; instead the price of soybeans fell from \$7.75 to \$6.60 a bushel, and concern about the surplus hangs over this year's planting.

Next on the list of federal subsidies is \$954 million for soil and water conservation. The same federal policies that encourage sodbusting of questionable land and boosting

production by means of chemicals are to blame for a significant portion of the erosion that this subsidy is meant to control. Another \$421 million goes to subsidize federal crop insurance, and about \$350 million is spent on emergency loans to help FmHA farmers whose crops have been damaged by weather.

An extra \$24.3 million in direct subsidies to farmers was provided in 1984 by the Small Business Administration, under a program that issues cut-rate loans to those hit by natural disasters. (In 1984 SBA "nonphysical-disaster" loans were granted to fertilizer companies in states where commodities released under the payment-in-kind program had reduced demand for fertilizer—one federal subsidy chasing another.) Agriculture also benefits indirectly from the \$1.1 billion spent on farm research and extension services, the \$18.2 billion spent on food stamps and child-nutrition programs, and the \$1.8 billion in Food for Peace aid to poor countries, all of which shore up crop demand. Finally, many billions have been spent on federally subsidized irrigation and electrical power in the West. For a variety of reasons, the exact cost of these subsidies—beyond \$80 million being spent this year to subsidize two- and five-percent loans for power and telephone lines to rural communities—defies calculation. Much of the expense is coming to an end, however, because of a law passed in 1982 that requires western growers to begin paying the full cost of their water.

IT IS COMMON FOR FARMERS—AND REPORTERS—TO speak as if in a just society virtuous products like food and fiber would only increase in value. Yet we find nothing amiss when the price of computers or eyeglasses falls, and we're upset when the prices of energy and housing climb. A successful economy is supposed to drive down the prices of goods, especially manufactured goods—and the advent of fertilizers, pesticides, self-propelled combines, and large tractors has made agriculture one of the least labor-intensive of industries. Each year the USDA charts farming "inputs" for capital and labor. The 1980 input for farm labor was a fifth that of 1930, while the input for machinery was three times greater, and the input for chemicals was twenty times greater. Farm groups say that there is something wrong with the fact that wheat costs less in real terms today than it did in 1870. There would be something wrong if it *didn't* cost less.

Farm-state congressmen often cite the index of prices for farm products from the Producer Price Index kept by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The PPI, like the Consumer Price Index, uses 1967 as its base year. Whereas the CPI rose to 311 in 1984, the index of prices for farm products has risen only to 256. The congressmen never mention that the indexes for almost *every* commodity within the PPI are behind, or only equal to, the CPI. Textile products and apparel are at 210, furniture and household appliances at 219, and rubber and plastic products at 247. Only non-metallic mineral products, at 337,



and energy, at 657, are significantly ahead of the CPI. For that matter, low producer prices keep the cost of running a farm down. Indeed, according to the USDA, the index of what machines, supplies, interest, taxes, and wages cost farmers runs about ten percent below the rate of inflation.

No one likes to be thought of as being on the federal dole, least of all farmers, who put a premium on self-reliance. Farm groups across the spectrum invariably say, "We don't want subsidies, we just want a price," meaning higher market prices, and they note that higher prices would result in less federal spending, because deficiency payments would decline. The next logical step is usually

not taken. Absent increased demand, higher prices can be realized only if excess production is controlled, either by cutting subsidies and letting some farmers fail (anathema to the left) or by imposing fierce restrictions on how much and what a farmer may plant (anathema to the right).

Farmers find it difficult to face the overproduction issue, mainly because of the nature of rural life. One of the salient cultural differences between farmers and city folk is that farmers live in places where everybody is in pretty much the same line of work. Everybody either is a farmer or provides a service that farmers need. Imagine if advertising executives had to live in complexes populated en-

tirely by other advertising executives and could have only advertising executives for friends. Would they be so aggressive about stealing business? To be true capitalists, farmers would have to view their neighbors as their arch-enemies. So they compensate by viewing farming itself—the act of working the fields, not of selling the finished product—as their purpose and keeping everybody going as their political challenge. This thinking reflects the kindness and communal purpose we admire in rural life. It also makes for too many farmers.

The regular experience of shared achievement and sorrow in a common pursuit is among the most appealing aspects of rural tradition. Indeed, farm advocates often argue that the communal quality of rural America should be preserved for its own sake, even if economics has passed it by. They say that farm living sets a spiritual example whose worth thus transcends cost-benefit analysis. But when farmers say that their way of life should be preserved for its own sake, inevitably they must argue that all farmers are equally deserving of protection—that farmers have a right to remain farmers.



IOWA: FELLOWSHIP REPLACED BY MACHINERY

IN AN INDUSTRY AS LARGE AS AMERICAN AGRICULTURE nothing is typical. There are the livestock pens of Texas, the vast irrigation networks of Nebraska and Arizona, the hog pens of Illinois and Indiana, the pastoral dairies of Wisconsin and Minnesota, the tiny tobacco plots of the mid-South, the citrus orchards of Florida, the uninterrupted wheat fields of Kansas. Nowhere is contrast more distinct than between the number-one and number-two agricultural states—California and Iowa.

California is a high-tech paradise. Farms are majestic; the climate is blissful. Californians produce some 200 commodities, including milk (the dairy business, surprisingly, is the state's biggest agricultural concern), cotton, rice, cattle, grapes, vegetables, plums, oranges, and almonds. Many farms are diversified: designed to produce several categories of crops and to shift from one to another as rapidly as demand changes.

In Iowa, farming is practiced more or less the way it always has been. Nearly all Iowa farms are family enterprises, and nearly all raise corn, soybeans, hogs, and cattle. The Iowa earth can be harsh, the weather cruel.

Just what constitutes a family farm of the Iowa variety

depends on the beholder. A growing number of the nation's 2.4 million farmers—right now, roughly half—sell less than \$10,000 worth of crops a year. Generally they work full-time jobs and farm on the side. According to Luther Tweeten, an agricultural economist at Oklahoma State University, most of these part-time farmers sell what they raise for less than they spend on production, leaving them several hundred to a thousand dollars in the hole each year, at least on paper. Such part-time farmers, Tweeten says, enjoy farming as an avocation and seek to qualify for farm tax breaks.

Those who sell from \$40,000 to \$100,000 worth of crops a year form the group commonly called family farmers. There are 381,000 of them, making up about 16 percent of the total farm population, and they are the most troubled—holding a disproportionate share of farm debt and typically having a lower disposable income than part-time farmers, because the farm is their sole source of income. Iowa is this group's stronghold.

The typical Iowa farmhouse is weathered beyond its years, with paint in various stages of peeling and cracks in interior walls. Visiting two dozen farms in various parts of the state last winter, I saw only one house that could qualify for teleportation to the middle-class suburbs of Atlanta or Portland—or Des Moines, for that matter. None of the farms I saw had paved driveways; several farmers who described themselves as successful mentioned as evidence of their good fortune gravel-covered drives. Owing to the lack of asphalt and concrete, mud was everywhere, deep enough in spots to make walking a trick.

Yet the people on these farms did not live in poverty. Nearly all the farmhouses I visited contained microwave ovens, color TVs, video-cassette recorders, and other tokens of consumer culture. No farmer I met drove a fancy car, but none lacked a car, either. All were well clothed and well fed. And the farm equipment that some possessed was a sight to behold: combines with wingspans like those of aircraft; four-wheel-drive tractors that could pull a Greyhound bus from a ditch; a few Steigers, the Corvettes of tractors, fitted out with air-conditioners and tape decks. This gleaming machinery, more than anything else, represents a profound change in the way farmers live—in the debt burdens they bear and in their relationships with their communities.

"Too many tractors with too much horsepower" is how Helen Lester, of Milo, who has been farming with her husband, Guy, since the Depression, summarized Iowa's predicament. Academics and journalists are not the only ones who began to believe around the mid-1960s that the small farm was doomed. Farmers believed it too. Awesome new tractors and combines would enable a family farmer to cultivate more land than ever. Farmers would almost have to buy more acres in order to spread those capital investments over a larger income base. Big new machines on bigger farms held out the promise that the family farmer could achieve the touted economies of scale enjoyed by sprawling ranches in Texas and the Southwest.

These machines also held out the promise of a more pleasant life, free of tedium and backbreaking labor. A Steiger, with its immense power, could plow more land in one day than a conventional tractor could plow in a week; the big combines would harvest crops with much less need for manpower. Improved seed varieties and chemicals were also coming into play, and were expected to diminish the demands that raising crops made on a farmer's time. What a dream began to emerge: a bigger farm, a higher income, and less physical work. The race was on. Sales of heavy machinery soared, and farms, even family farms, expanded in size.

THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL REAL ESTATE ESCALATED from \$216 billion in 1970 to \$756 billion in 1980 and then crashed. In 1984 it was \$765 billion—a decline of about 23 percent when inflation is taken into account. In all the commentary on this fabulous rise and fall, it is rarely noted that farmers themselves were the driving force behind the price changes. Urban growth, often presented as the culprit, exerted a minor influence at best: only three percent of all land in the United States is built on, for cities, suburbs, or highways. When farmers sell, it is almost always to other farmers: the most prized farmland is that which adjoins an existing farm. Through the 1970s farmers sought more land, and farm size increased by an average of 13 percent.

Traditionally farmers have been frugal people, fearful of debt and wary of promises of quick wealth. But they did not respond to the economic developments of the 1970s with characteristic reserve. (In fairness, neither did millions of other Americans. Major corporations lost billions of dollars in sure-thing energy investments, and all sorts of people bought real estate as if the prices could never break, poisoning their loans on the assumption of perpetual inflation.) Using machines, chemicals, and new land, farmers both here and abroad expanded their productive capacity by so much in the 1970s that a fall became all but certain. Production through the decade rose at three percent a year in the United States—a record pace for annual growth. Meanwhile, food demand was not increasing as fast as production, and demand for some foods was falling.

Many farmers who bought large machinery told themselves that they would cover the payments by doing "custom work"—tilling and harvesting for other farms. As ownership of combines and 400-horsepower tractors became unremarkable, more farmers were offering custom work than needing it done. One farmer I visited, Pat Meade, in Milo, said, "You can pretty much tell which farms are in trouble by whether they're four-wheel or two-wheel." Meade uses a 1976 100-horsepower tractor that he maintains himself. He said, "When farmers discovered that a big machine would enable them to do all their plowing in a single day and spend the rest of the week at the coffee shop, a lot of them couldn't resist, even if they

couldn't afford it. Combines were the worst. The average family farmer actually uses his combine less than thirty days a year. The rest of the time it sits in a shed. Seventy-five to a hundred thousand dollars sitting in your shed, doing nothing." Farmers who went heavily into debt to buy big machines and more acres were dubbed plungers.

A century ago the free-silver movement, led by William Jennings Bryan, centered on the desire for a liberal money supply so that there would be more for farmers to borrow and more for consumers to spend. In the 1970s inflation, though less glorious in conception than free silver, provided the financial climate many farmers had always thought they wanted. Plungers became community heroes. Farm journals were filled with stories of "young tigers" who were not afraid to take on staggering debt loads. "Those who dive deepest will come out on top" was a common saying. When briefly during the 1970s interest rates were below the inflation rate, borrowers came out ahead merely by borrowing. Farmers are dependent on credit even in good times, because they must pay production expenses months before they have crops to sell. The economic conditions of the 1970s seemed to say that it had actually become smart to pile loans on top of loans. But if inflation stopped, the loans would smash into each other like race cars trying to avoid a wreck.

The FmHA, production-credit associations, and banks were just as much to blame for plunging as farmers. With acreage values rising at up to 20 percent a year, farmland was an investment that was staying ahead of inflation. Many banks, needing borrowers to generate income on their inflation-pumped deposits, encouraged farmers to leverage themselves to the limit. According to Meade, "During the 1970s there were times when lenders quite literally drove up and down the road, knocked on people's doors, and asked them if they could use more credit." Philip Lehman, a farmer in Slater, Iowa, and an official of the Iowa Farmers Union, an organization that lobbies for increased federal farm aid, sat on the loan-approval board of a production-credit association in the early 1970s. "Things got to where it was difficult for me to put my initials on the applications," Lehman told me. "It was like granting people licenses to go under."

AS INFLATION AND GLEAMING SUPERTRACTORS DISPELLED farmers' qualms about extravagant spending, so they altered the spirit of farm communities. Farmers who drove Steigers didn't have to call on their neighbors for help when a wagon got stuck in the mud. Those with combines didn't have to wait for harvesting crews, nor did they have to offer to join in harvesting a neighbor's land. Many farmers borrowed to build their own silos and storage facilities during the 1970s, loosening their dependence on town silos and diminishing their obligation to attend co-op meetings. Farmers began to feel guilty of what they disliked most about city dwellers—an absence of community spirit.



"Because farmers want to be self-reliant, the combines and the tractors had an extremely seductive appeal," James Schutter, the pastor of the United Methodist church in Tingley, Iowa, told me last winter. "Machines made you really self-reliant. People didn't realize the machines would also make you isolated. As soon as it became technologically possible to farm independently, everybody wanted that." Milton Henderson, of Mt. Ayr, Iowa, who is retired after working for the Iowa State University extension service for thirty years, said, "Threshing and harvesting parties were wonderful events—much warmer, and more human, community events than the kind we have now, like high school basketball games." He added, "I

would never want to go back to the past, plowing four acres a day with a team of horses. I'm just saying the sense of fellowship is gone, replaced by machinery."

Dairy, livestock, and poultry farmers still work year-round, because animals must be tended continually, but well-equipped crop farmers have it easier. They face three months of heavy work during planting and two more at harvest. Farm-crisis stories tend to appear in winter partly because it is then that crop farmers, without daily work to do in their fields, do their lobbying. When the American Agricultural Movement staged its tractorcade in 1979, bringing hundreds of farm machines to Washington to block traffic, AAM members made speech after speech

about how their backs were to the wall. Yet many had arrived in brand-new Steigers equipped with stereo systems, and some spent several months in the capital, in no apparent hurry to attend to their businesses. William Olmsted, a United Methodist minister in Greenfield, Iowa, has noticed a subtle change in farm sociology. He told me, "Making your rounds in winter, you can knock on doors at five farmhouses in a row and find no one home. They've gone to town, or are on vacation. Farmers used to *always* be home."

FENCEROW TO FENCEROW

FARMERS SAY THEY EXPANDED IN THE 1970S BECAUSE they were sent a signal from the highest levels of government instructing them to do so. There can be no doubt that they were.

In the 1970s the USDA predicted that food production would fall behind world demand. A book called *Famine 1975* attracted considerable attention when it was published in 1967. When the 1972 Russian grain deal caused wheat prices to rise and poor harvests caused food in general to become costlier, many thought that the pessimistic forecasts had been confirmed and they began to cry shortage. Richard Nixon's secretary of agriculture, Earl Butz, is said to have advised farmers to plant "from fencerow to fencerow." That phrase is now fixed in the heartland's litany of woes as firmly as the Russian grain embargo: farmers refer to it again and again. In 1973 the headline of an article in *The New York Times* declared, "DAYS OF 'CHEAP FOOD' MAY BE OVER." As the decade passed and world harvests remained poor, the idea that the Russians and others would soon be begging us for grain caught hold. Oil prices were rising and the market for gasohol, made with corn alcohol, seemed about to take off. Declarations that agriculture was "the bulwark of democracy," "America's answer to OPEC," and so on became political clichés. When exports were booming, in 1980, President Jimmy Carter's secretary of agriculture, Bob Bergland, declared, "The era of chronic overproduction . . . is over."

"About ten years ago it looked like you just couldn't go wrong by expanding," Jim White, a farmer in Pleasantville, Iowa, told me. White is operating his farm under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code. In the late 1970s White bought land and equipment on credit and also co-signed notes so that two of his sons would be able to enter farming. In White's house a stack of foreclosure documents sits by trophies that White and his father won for being Polk County Corn Champions in 1963 and 1964. "My dad had taught me to be cautious, but everybody—I mean everybody—was saying that biggest had become best," White said.

Who in the 1970s could have predicted that by 1985 rising inflation would be only a memory, that the value of the dollar would rise so dramatically on the world exchange market, that developing countries would begin producing

food for export, that gasohol would flop (gas stations in Iowa now post signs proclaiming NO ALCOHOL IN OUR FUEL), and that consumption of dairy products and red meat would decline? This web of events surprised even smooth-talking experts. The average farmer could not possibly have foreseen it. White's production-credit-association loans contained variable-interest-rate clauses. "They said I had nothing to worry about—that rates had varied only a fraction of a point since 1970," White told me. "My rate went from 7 percent to 18.5 percent."

Does the fact that the government has misled farmers confer on them a right to special compensation? The frequency with which the national winds shift leads politicians routinely to give industries bad advice, and part of being a businessman is knowing what to ignore and what to take seriously. More important, though Earl Butz's advice certainly sounds foolish in today's economic climate, it was delivered thirteen years ago, in a different climate. How many businesses could survive by clinging to strategies thirteen years out of date? There would be scant public sympathy for an automobile company still making cars that get ten miles to a gallon. Because of the nature of agriculture, farmers have a more difficult time responding to economic changes than people in other industries. But this does not mean that they should be exempt from having to respond. In February the entire South Dakota state legislature traveled to Washington to lobby for more farm aid. When South Dakota's governor, William Janklow, appeared on the ABC News program *Nightline* to state his case, he absolved farmers of blame because, he said, "Earl Butz told them to plant fencerow to fencerow"—as though this had happened the year before.

It could be that farmers attach almost religious significance to what Butz said because it was the one time they were told exactly what they wanted to hear. Agriculture, a quiet line of work in which it was nearly impossible to get rich, was going to take off. Thanks to technology, incomes would rise and workloads would fall; farmers would rescue the country from foreign debt and become national heroes. With crops in demand, farmers could sell them on the market, not to the government, and make their money fair and square. Everything was finally going to be all right. It is human nature to cling to the moment when things were going to be all right, and so it is natural that farmers should cling to the vision of the early 1970s.

FOR FARMERS, GOVERNMENT POLICY IS LIKE THE weather. It's good for a spell, it's bad for a spell, and there's just no predicting. In addition to making business planning difficult, flip-flops of policy inevitably build resentment against government, even when the subsidies are flowing.

One farmer, in Creston, Iowa, told me, "I know for a fact that agriculture is controlled by a special committee of bankers and manufacturing interests and that no one is allowed to use the committee's name." Another, in Cory-

don, Iowa, said, "There was a secret meeting in 1947 at which a plan was laid out to destroy the family farm, and everything that has happened since comes directly from the plan." The two speakers were not kooks, and I heard similar sentiments from others during my travels in Iowa.

A fair reading of recent history is that the federal government would have to form a firing squad just to shoot itself in the foot. Nevertheless, some farmers do believe that their troubles must have a nefarious source. Many look outside the federal government. A popular target of suspicion is the Chicago Board of Trade, which most farmers resent as a rich man's plaything designed to make easy prof-

its from the workingman's toil, and which some are convinced was invented by the anti-farm conspiracy in order to cause chaos in farm prices. (Some farmers now use the commodities exchange to hedge their crops, but the Iowa farmers I spoke to said they simply couldn't bring themselves to do that, even if it does make business sense.) Conspiracy theories in themselves are probably harmless, but their prevalence in rural communities suggests that farmers wish to fix the blame as far away from home as possible—to dwell in an unreal world. That wish helps to explain why farmers seem so bitter in television news footage.

Dissatisfaction rules life on the farm today, and the unhappiness farmers vent in the media or at political rallies probably does more to advance the idea of an endless crisis in farming than does the actual incidence of foreclosures. The unhappiness stems in part from raised and then dashed expectations. "Every year for the last fifty years had been a little better than the year before, until the 1980s," Carolyn Erb, a farmer in Ackworth, Iowa, said when I met with her last winter. At some point having a better year begins to seem like a right. That the Washington, D.C., tractorcade was staged in 1979, a year that turned out to be the second best on record for farm profit, shows how consuming a force self-pity can be.

The structure of farm economics guarantees that farmers will be frustrated. Suppose your year's salary would be \$20,000, \$40,000, or \$60,000, with the amount determined by a lottery based on what day you asked for your pay. That is the arrangement that most farmers have to live with. The advent of international blockbuster deals adds turbulence to the market. "Now our decision on exactly what day to sell can make or break us for the entire year," Nancy Meade told me.

Many businesses, of course, must deal with macroeconomic unknowns, but how many individual workers have to? Auto workers are not expected each time they report for their shifts to perform an analysis of international sales patterns, according to which their wages will later be calculated. Family farmers must be laborers, market analysts, and financial managers all at once. Considering the modest track record of specialists who do nothing but predict agricultural markets, it is unreasonable to expect the records of individual farmers to be any better. The anxiety over when to sell can place extreme stress on a farm marriage: the husband may feel obliged to dictate the selling strategy, which offends the wife, who in turn blames the husband for market changes he couldn't possibly have predicted. The sheer uncertainty is oppressive. To return to the salary-lottery analogy, even if you picked the \$60,000 day you would be upset about the wringer you'd been put through.

Endless waiting for Washington to make up its mind about farm programs produces more unhappiness. Ronald Reagan announced the latest emergency credit program for farmers in September, 1984, but as of February, 1985, with spring planting approaching, the FmHA had made

MAKING LOVE

You can't ever remember it really.
 You wake up and you do not know
 where you are or who you are or
 what you are, the last light of the evening is
 coming up to the windows, not coming in, and it is
 more like a cold mist than light,
 greenish, standing there in the deep frames,
 the bedpost a dark knob, not gleaming, the
 heavy heavy body of the desk
 between two windows—solid maple with its
 curled resinous birds-eyes shining inside the wood. And you
 try to think back, you cannot remember it,
 it stands in the back of your mind like a mountain,
 at night, behind you, enormous, or a field of
 snow at night, your pants are torn or
 across the room or still dangling from one leg like a
 heavy scarlet loop of the body, your
 bra is half on or not on or you were naked to begin with,
 you cannot remember, all you know is you feel
 absolute, and everything is changed.
 Tomorrow, maybe, taking a kid to school,
 your foot half off the curb in the air you'll
 see his mouth where it was and feel it and the
 large dark double star of your two bodies
 but for now you are like the one in the crib,
 you are everyone right now,
 the three milky greenish windows like
 sentinels there saying Don't worry,
 you will not remember, you will never know.

—Sharon Olds

decisions on only about two percent of the applications it had received. Farmers who had asked for aid had to sit and stew all fall and winter, wondering whether they would be able to stay in business and powerless to find out. Many of those who ultimately got extra help were inclined to be resentful rather than grateful.

Dissatisfaction extends even to successful farmers. Because federal subsidies have the effect of keeping everybody at least barely in business, overproduction prevents successful farmers from realizing the profits they otherwise might. Since farm commodities are basically interchangeable, farmers cannot compete with one another by offering different features or higher quality, as manufacturers can. They can compete only by undercutting already depressed market prices. Those who resisted taking the debt plunge or who run their operations unusually well say they feel pressured to pay for the errors of the careless.

Suppose the government stepped into the computer industry, which is suffering from oversupply, to make sure no manufacturer went out of business. Successful companies like IBM and Apple would be unhappy, because the artificial stimulation of supply would prevent them from getting full value for their products. Unsuccessful companies would find themselves in the debilitating position of being dependent on Uncle Sam and ridden with anxiety over whether their handouts would continue. Everyone would be working, yet no one would be happy. There would be a "computer crisis."

IN FARM COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE HEARTLAND THERE is one more level of anxiety. Farmers have never been able to look forward to wealth, but they have had a satisfaction that city workers with better pay cannot hope for—the moment when they hand the farm over to their children. For many farmers that moment is the culmination of a responsible life; for the younger generation it is the moment when the world recognizes that they have done what was expected of them. "Right now it's not a responsible act to bring a son into the business, and you don't know what that does to the farmer's mind," Rod Erb, Carolyn's husband, told me. Transferring a highly capitalized farm from parent to child entails leveraging to the hilt. Under these circumstances parents consider themselves failures, and children, unable to do what generations before them have done, feel they have compromised their entire family histories.

After I left Iowa, there was one farm couple that I couldn't get out of my mind: Dennis and Patricia Eddy, who live in Stuart and have three young sons. The Eddys are existing on six subsidized loans. They had qualified for the Reagan emergency credit aid, which would save them about \$23,000 in interest payments overall. They hadn't paid income taxes in five years. The kitchen of their farmhouse had been remodeled and was strikingly attractive; I noticed a microwave oven and other minor luxuries. They had a pure-bred Doberman puppy. Here was a couple who

could easily be portrayed as hooked on handouts. "Just once in my life I would like to live at the poverty line," Patricia complained, yet her federal aid is more than many city families with greater need receive—to say nothing of the fact that she lives in her own home. Most urban welfare recipients, I felt sure, would exchange places with the Eddys in the blink of an eye.

Except for the kitchen, however, the Eddys' home was modest. By no stretch of the imagination was the family living indulgently. There didn't seem to be any chance that they would buy a sports car, eat in three-star restaurants, or enjoy many other luxuries that young professionals who went to graduate school on government-subsidized loans consider their due. I felt sure that none of the conservative theoreticians who rail against subsidies in the fastness of paneled libraries would exchange places with the Eddys.

The Eddys said that they were dismayed by having had six different FmHA loan supervisors in eighteen months, each of whom had issued a new set of instructions on how the couple ought to run their lives; by unending anxiety about whether their crops would grow and in turn sell; and by the public perception that those in debt to the FmHA are "bad farmers," which surely is not true.

For a while policymakers diagnosed increasing federal agricultural expenditures as a problem caused by "bad farmers" and "bad managers," who squandered their aid. The label has stuck—one farmer introduced himself to me as "just another bad manager"—although there is nearly universal agreement among agricultural observers that truly lazy or incompetent farmers are rare. If anything, farmers are *too* good at what they do. They produce too much, and they are baffled and anguished by the fact that bringing food out of the ground, as they were taught was right, does not invariably lead to success. The Eddys were working as hard as they knew how, and that was what stayed with me.

CALIFORNIA: MBAS IN OVERALLS

IOWA SEEMS LIKE AN OUTPOST ON THE MOON BY COMPARISON with the San Joaquin Valley, in central California. Nearly anything will grow in the valley's benign climate. The land is flat, which is perfect for farming, and cows graze in the nearby foothills of the Sierra Nevada as if they were in the Alps. In Iowa some farmers had plowed and planted their front yards, but here in Fresno and Tulare counties, one of the world's most productive agricul-

tural regions, every square inch seemed to have been tilled. Farmhouses are modern ranch-style buildings with carports. Machinery doesn't rust. In the Midwest, farms are discrete places because farmers generally buy only land that adjoins their own; in California, however, farms tend to consist of scattered parcels. The scattering lowers the sentimental value of each farm, and it also works against any sense that farms are fortresses to be defended against an encroaching outside world. Farms in California seem much more like businesses. One sees few four-wheel-drive tractors with balloon tires. "Farmers like to buy tractors, managers like to make money," a Californian told me when I visited farms in the state last winter.

One of California's largest operations is Harris Farms, Inc., of Coalinga. The average U.S. farm has 437 acres; Harris has 17,000, and it's as diversified as can be—cotton, tomatoes, garlic, almonds, onions, grapes, potatoes, wheat, and cattle. It is not a corporate farm; John Harris, the only child of the founder, is the sole owner. During the 1970s, when the land frenzy drove prices to \$3,500 an acre in the valley and as high as \$15,000 an acre in the prestigious vineyard counties, Harris didn't buy. "We could never figure out how to make buying land at those prices pay," he told me.

Harris has 125 full-time workers, whom he calls "employees," and 100 units of housing for them, of a quality better than that of a trailer park but not as good as that of a subdivision. Unskilled seasonal laborers—migrant workers—make \$4 an hour, full-time tractor operators make about \$14,000 a year, and foremen make up to \$65,000. Two foremen, Richard Lobmeyer and Juan Barrera, spend an increasing amount of time with computers: Harris Farms has a large mainframe computer for accounting and half a dozen personal computers for other tasks.

Barrera, for example, uses software designed for tomato growing to track temperature, humidity, and the rate of transpiration and to predict exactly how much irrigation the vines will need. Harris has been switching to less wasteful means of irrigation, such as drip pipes, which apply small doses of water directly to a plant's roots. (Before the 1982 law was passed, many heartland farmers complained bitterly that California water was subsidized, ignoring the fact that their own water falls from the sky free of charge.) Much of Harris's production is sold to food processors by a standard supplier's contract—a promise to deliver a certain tonnage of, say, tomatoes on a given day at an agreed price. This reduces the potential for a windfall, but it also eliminates anxiety over fluttering prices.

In rural communities it seems to be considered bad taste to build a luxurious house, and Harris does not flout that convention. He lives in the modest house where he was raised, which sits directly across the parking lot from the company's headquarters, concealed behind hedges. His office, however, would make any lawyer proud: it is large and wood-paneled, with original art on the walls and a commodity-price monitor on the credenza.

Diversification as practiced at Harris Farms is said to be the future for profitable agriculture, because it allows the clever manager to stay a step ahead of demand. Midwestern farmers have some ability to shift among the products their environment will support: wheat, corn, soybeans, sorghum, and livestock. For example, when grain prices fall and livestock prices rise, farmers can feed their grain to the stock and sell it ultimately as meat. Trends in the supply of these commodities tend to be parallel, however, and so the degree to which midwestern farmers can diversify often does not amount to much. Being able to shift among unrelated crops—cotton to onions to lettuce—makes for better protection against the erratic market. Working with small specialty crops also enables growers to get an idea of where they stand relative to the competition. Lobmeyer explained: "There are eleven million acres of cotton fields scattered all around the United States. Realistically, there's no way we can get a sense of what other cotton growers are doing. But there are just 294,000 acres of process tomatoes in the country, and 84 percent of them are here in California."

Harris Farms operates almost entirely without federal subsidies. Most of its crops aren't eligible for support. Harris does not enroll his cotton and wheat acreage with the CCC, because, he said, the maximum loan is inconsequential for a 17,000-acre enterprise and not worth the bother of going after.

Despite his computers, his economies of scale, and his lack of dependence on the government, Harris is pessimistic. He told me, "At this point farmers have become capable of producing a surplus of just about everything. The regulated programs get all the attention, because they involve federal deficits and family farms, but profit margins in specialty crops are becoming almost as bad." The market for grapes, once a glamour crop, is more depressed than the market for corn. Citrus fruits are about the only crop widely agreed to be profitable this year—profitable, that is, for growers who weren't hit by a series of frosts in Florida and Texas that cut supply. Harris observed that if the country had not experienced a cycle of poor weather for crops in three of the past five years, which led to disappointing yields, surpluses would be even greater than they are, and prices lower.

The weather of late has been unusually severe in southern Iowa, where the gullied bottomland is in any case ill-suited to farming. In 1983 the rain was so relentless that farms were flooded with mud. Pat and Nancy Meade, who live in southern Iowa, lost twenty of the hundred calves born on their farm that year because they drowned in the mud. A high percentage of the hard-luck farm stories presented as typical on television and in newsmagazines have southern-Iowa datelines.

To some extent a bad year can be offset by the generous tax treatment accorded to agriculture. For example, many types of farm buildings and fruit trees can be depreciated, and deductions can be taken for supplies that will not actually be used until the following year. Played properly, the



game allows the payment of taxes to be postponed almost indefinitely.

Investors who buy into farms do not, as popular lore would have it, "profit from losing money": the best investment is always one that makes money. The situation of a "tax farmer" is roughly like this. Say that a doctor in the 50 percent tax bracket has \$100 in marginal income. If he does nothing, the government takes \$50 and he keeps \$50. If he shelters the money in a farm generating a \$100 deduction, his tax bill is reduced by \$50. In both cases the doctor walks away with \$50. But in the second case he also has some equity in the farm.

Since the doctor keeps \$50 no matter what, all the in-

vestment has to do is make a dollar and he will come out ahead. Thus a commercial farmer who needs a decent income to care for his family is at a disadvantage with respect to a tax farmer for whom any income is pure gravy.

In the long run agriculture's favored tax status may do farm families more harm than good, because shelters encourage the overproduction that is at the core of agriculture's problems. From one pocket the government hands out tax breaks to encourage more farm investment and from the other it hands out subsidies to compensate for the depressed prices that investment causes. Nevertheless, farm-state legislators have extreme difficulty opposing any measure presented as a "farm tax break."

SURROUNDED BY SURPLUS

AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS HAVE STOPPED INCREASING over the past few years, after having grown steadily through the 1970s. The strength of the dollar is usually cited as the reason, and without doubt the strong dollar is a factor. But the growth trend in exports probably would have stalled regardless, because many countries are generating food surpluses of their own. Moreover, almost all of the industrialized countries have higher internal subsidies and more-restrictive trade laws than we do.

In the late 1960s the countries in the European Economic Community met up to 90 percent of their demand for grain. In 1984, a bumper crop year, EEC farmers met 125 percent of that demand. U.S. agricultural sales to the USSR make headlines, but sales to Western Europe have been far more significant in volume. In 1983, for example, Europe bought about \$10 billion worth of U.S. food—ten times as much as the Soviet Union did. Last year Soviet grain purchases hit a record high, and yet total sales to “centrally planned countries” accounted for just ten percent of U.S. exports. Asian nations are our best customers. In 1983 they bought \$13.5 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products. But since then sales to Asia have been stable or falling.

World wheat production, 447 million metric tons in 1978, is expected to be 505 million metric tons this year—a 13 percent increase. Also since 1978 world rice production has increased by 20 percent and world cotton production by some 35 percent. In every part of the world except Africa and Japan food production is increasing faster than population.

The increased production, particularly in developing countries, can be attributed partly to the spread of modern technology and farming methods—progress that the United States has encouraged and in many cases has funded and supervised. We have a moral obligation to share our agricultural secrets with the world and should be proud that we have done so, but the cost has turned out to be greater than we expected. The world's increased production can also be attributed to U.S. farm-subsidy programs. For many commodities American support prices become the world floor prices, because whenever the going rate falls below what the CCC will pay, a significant portion of the supply is withdrawn from the market. Equilibrium between supply and demand is restored and the decline in the market price is halted. Nonrecourse loan programs, intended to limit the risk to American farmers, have the effect of limiting the risk to farmers in other countries, as well. For example, Argentina knew in 1981, courtesy of an act of Congress, approximately what the floor price for grain for the next four years would be, and thus could plan accordingly.

The agricultural programs of other countries are far more protectionist than those of the United States. Within the EEC agricultural commodities move freely, but what are in effect tariffs prevent food from being brought into

the community at less than the regulated price. Thus American farmers are not permitted to undercut the market price in Europe, whereas any shipper may sell cheaply here. When the EEC has surplus grain, exporters receive direct subsidies to sell their overstock at below-market prices. The European subsidies are threatening to break the bank; several times in recent years the EEC Commission has recommended that the subsidies be cut, only to have farm interests in member nations beat the effort back. In 1986 Spain and Portugal—two potentially major agricultural producers—are expected to join the community, hide behind its tariff curtain, and use its subsidies to boost production.

Japan's regulations are even more stringent. Various restrictions limit the sale in Japan of U.S. commodities for which there might otherwise be higher demand—particularly beef and fruits. According to Yujiro Hayami and Masayoshi Honma, economists at Tokyo Metropolitan University, Switzerland has the world's most protectionist agricultural system, with domestic prices half again as high as the world average. Japan's is next, with domestic prices 45 percent higher than the world average. The EEC's domestic prices are 25 percent higher, and the United States, where domestic prices are slightly below the world average, ranks last in protectionism.

It is perhaps understandable that Europe and Japan, which have known famines in this century, should be anxious to keep farm production up. It's harder to understand the Reagan Administration's behavior. In March, President Reagan withdrew the pressure on the Japanese to observe voluntary auto-export quotas and asked nothing in return. If the Administration continues to push for cutbacks in U.S. agricultural production without insisting that members of the EEC cut back as well, subsidized European farmers will rush in to grab U.S. export markets.

We should be grateful that Japan has so little land, else it would surely make life as hard for American farmers as it has for American manufacturers. Another Asian country, however, has lots of land and a strong agricultural tradition: China. In 1980 China bought \$2.3 billion worth of U.S. food and fiber. Now its purchases are down to \$500 million and the country has begun to export cotton. Chinese officials have been stepping back from the commune system and introducing a limited form of capitalism in their fields; the results have been dramatic. Since 1978 China's cotton production has risen by 150 percent, its soybean production by 84 percent, its wheat production by 58 percent, and its rice production by 27 percent. Many production techniques used in China are backward (for example, cotton is shipped in nonstandard-sized bales, small enough for two men to lift manually), but Western methods and machines are being introduced. In China workers are accustomed to strict discipline and low wages; modern production could transform the country into the world's breadbasket. “They are much closer to it already than we like to think about,” Kenneth Billings, the president of Fresno County's Federal Land Bank, says.

U.S. farm productivity by acre, which has declined slightly from its peak, in 1982, can be expected to rise again soon, as new hybrids, growth hormones, and chemicals come onto the market. A little further down the road gene splicing might make possible entirely new strains of plants that could spark another Green Revolution. The problems of oversupply in the future could make those today seem like warm-ups.



THE ANNUAL CRISIS

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER ROBERT DOLE SAID RECENTLY that in every one of his twenty-five years in Congress there has been a farm problem. During the late 1940s President Harry S. Truman tried to cut back many farm subsidies and was rebuffed by a livid Democratic Congress. The Senate majority leader at that time, Scott Lucas, of Illinois, sounded very much like Dole when he complained of senators who "are constantly talking about economy in government . . . who have no hesitancy in getting off the economy bandwagon . . . to take care of their own communities . . . regardless of what the cost may be in the future." The Eisenhower Administration pushed through some farm-support cuts in 1953, but when it tried to go further, in 1958, it was defeated. That year Senator Allen Ellender, of Louisiana, argued, "This is not the time to lower prices farmers receive, particularly when farm income is already at an all-time low." New Deal descendant Lyndon Johnson moved to cut farm subsidies by \$540 million in the budget he submitted in 1969, just before he left office. Nixon angered farmers with his attempts to change farm programs. Carter, a farmer, not only asked that subsidies be cut but stood fast during the 1979 tractorcade, refusing to make significant concessions.

The job of secretary of agriculture has chewed up most of those who have held it. Truman's "Brannan plan," named for Agriculture Secretary Charles Brannan, became a euphemism for political lunacy, the racetrack MX of its day. Radical farmers like some members of the American Agricultural Movement point to Eisenhower's Ezra Taft Benson as the first mastermind of the anti-farm conspiracy. LBJ's Orville Freeman, whose affiliation with the Minnesota Democratic Farmer Labor Party was beyond reproach, got into trouble by suggesting that cotton growers cut their prices in order to compete in the world market. Carter's secretary, Bob Bergland, who himself had been a farmer, ended his term amid acrimony. Now Reagan's secretary,

John Block, formerly an Illinois hog farmer, is an object of scorn for having gone along with Reagan in the effort to cut farm subsidies. Block has hardly been helped by the fact that his former business partner, John Curry, was a plunger who bought up land with FmHA assistance and then defaulted. Every farmer I met in the Midwest knew about this case; some spoke of Curry as if he were a poisonous snake.

Partly because of the continuous anxiety to which they are subject, farmers have a long history of crying wolf. The agriculture committees, staffed by farm-bloc congressmen, do too. In 1965 a report of the House Agriculture Committee warned, "Hundreds of thousands of our most progressive farmers will find their debt positions intolerable and will be forced into bankruptcy"—language almost identical to that used last winter.

Checking old newspapers, I found that farmers have been proclaiming the "worst year since the Depression" regularly since the early 1950s. Reporting that placed the claim in historical perspective was rare, except for the occasional "down with farmers" piece that exaggerated in the other direction. Covering agriculture is a delicate matter for journalists, and especially for television crews. Someone who loses a farm loses his job, his home, and his way of life all on the same day. It would seem heartless of a reporter to mention that dispossessions are the exception or that thousands of other people experience tragedies that are of equal weight but that simply don't fit a news peg.

"They're taking away my land" is a plaintive cry of farmers, and when true, it's terrible to hear. Often it isn't true. A farmer who defaults on his loan is not losing his land so much as some part of his investment in it. The bank is the true owner of the farm, just as ultimately it is the owner of a mortgaged house.

Through the 1970s the farm bloc complained that farmers were being destroyed by inflation. Senator Jesse Helms, of North Carolina, who is the chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said in 1981, "Farmers understand that unless this inflation is cured, they don't stand a chance." Now that the cure has taken effect, the *lack* of inflation is said to be a special hardship for farmers. Similarly, cries of "foul" were heard in response to the escalation in farmland prices while it was taking place, even though it was making holdings more valuable. Four years ago Catherine Lerza, the head of the National Family Farm Coalition, declared that high land prices had created a crisis for farmers. At about the same time Representative Berkley Bedell, of Iowa, proposed a \$250 million Beginning Farmers Assistance Act to subsidize purchases of farmland. Now, of course, it is the decline in land prices that is said to pose a crisis for family farmers.

Using the Department of Agriculture's parity tables, some farm advocates claim that farmers are worse off today than ever. Parity tables are supposed to show the buying power of farmers; 1910-1914, when farm prices were strong, is taken as the base period and given a value of 100.

In 1984 parity hovered around 58—that is, farmers had 58 percent of the buying power of their forerunners decades earlier. Figures like these are extremely misleading, however, because calculations of parity treat the present as if it were 1914. For example, they take into account the fact that tractors cost more but not that they do more. Parity makes an effective round of political ammunition, but it is not a reliable indicator on which to base policy. One farm-state congressional staff member told me, “Any farmer who seriously believes he would be living twice as well if it were 1914 again is crazy.”

At a House Agriculture Subcommittee hearing in February, I gave up trying to count the number of times words like *desperate*, *disaster*, *unprecedented*, and *dying* were used. Representative Steve Gunderson, of Wisconsin, asserted, “Clearly, within the credit crisis confronting agriculture we are literally facing the fundamental destruction of rural society.” Representative E. Thomas Coleman, of Missouri, declared that “farmers are faced with such high interest rates, declining land values, and low return for their products that they are reliving the Great Depression of the 1930’s.” At this hearing and throughout the battle over emergency aid, farm-bloc congressmen repeatedly predicted that as many as 10 percent of the nation’s farmers could go bankrupt by March 1—the traditional deadline of banks for issuing spring planting loans—if substantially more than \$650 million was not provided. A bonus-credit-aid bill was passed but Reagan vetoed it. The first of March came and went, the wave of foreclosures that was supposed to sweep the country did not occur, and the story vanished.

Resisting pressure for spending is a recurring challenge in Washington, and the ability of even conservative Republicans from farm country to forget their speeches about deficits and call for more agricultural subsidies has been remarkable for years. Farmers make powerful claims on the legislature in part because they make up a high percentage of the population in rural communities. In heartland congressional districts almost everyone is tied to the farm economy. No other constituent group—not auto workers in Detroit or gas producers in Louisiana—places such a statistical lock on its representatives.

Another running theme in Washington is the demand for a crackdown on rampant waste in somebody else’s program. Farm groups are among those who have most vociferously protested the federal debt, which contributes to high interest rates and the strength of the dollar. But they also want more spending for farms, which would drive the deficit up. Last winter five of the country’s largest agricultural associations formed a lobby called the Balanced Bud-

get Brigade. While some spokesmen were making the rounds on Capitol Hill, demanding that the deficit be slashed, others were demanding extra credit aid. During his appearance on *Nightline* Governor Janklow sneered at Congress’s failure to balance the budget—a feat that even New Right thinkers admit will be out of the question for many years—and boasted that states balance their budgets. Janklow didn’t add that the main reason why state budgets are balanced is that federal grants supply 18.5 percent, on average, of state revenue. If a cosmic philanthropist made an 18.5 percent contribution to the federal budget, then the federal budget would also balance.

FINDING SOLUTIONS FOR A CHRONIC PROBLEM LIKE agricultural overproduction can vex democratic systems, which almost inevitably focus their attention on the demands of the moment. “Every time we do a farm bill, the short-term outlook—what happens one year down the road—overwhelms all other considerations,” William Hoagland, the deputy staff director of the Senate Budget Committee, who was raised on an Indiana farm, told me recently. “In 1981 all we talked about was inflation, which turned out to be a moot point almost immediately after we finished debating it. This year it’s debt. What we want from agriculture, what our long-term goals ought to be, stands no chance [of consideration], compared to whatever was in that morning’s paper.”

Eventually Congress will have to face the fact that there are too many farmers. The farm bill that Reagan has proposed, which in effect would abandon those parts of the federal program that subsidize the least successful farmers, may not be perfect, but so far it is the only one to concentrate on the problem of overproduction. The solutions to that problem do not lie solely in the realm of economic abstraction. They will involve a painful human cost. If the Reagan plan or something like it is enacted, Dennis and Patricia Eddy, for example, may lose their farm. That would not be a happy day for them or for any caring citizen. But the Eddys are young, responsible, bright, and eager to work. If they can’t land on their feet, who can?

Early this year Representative E. Kika de la Garza, of Texas, the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, said he might support changes in federal agriculture programs, but only if they could be achieved “without sacrificing one single farmer.” This is like saying, Let’s cut back that bloated defense budget—as long as no contractors lose work. There can still be family farms. It’s just that not every person who wants a farm can have one, no matter how fervently we might wish he could. □



FIRST ENCOUNTERS

DOROTHY PARKER AND DASHIELL HAMMETT

DASHIELL HAMMETT was clearly off his guard. Sam Spade would have cased the joint on arrival, spotted the phonies and deadbeats, reconnoitered. But Hammett, old Pinkerton sleuth that he was, had grown soft and careless in sunny, moneyed Hollywood. Escorting his friend Lillian Hellman to a New York cocktail party in the fall of 1931, he shrugged off precaution and paid for it.

He had scarcely accepted his first drink when he was introduced to a tiny, dark-eyed woman who, without warning, dropped dramatically to her silk-stockinged knees, grasped his hand, and kissed it. Stunned, Hammett stared icily down at her. Of course he knew of Dorothy Parker, reigning lady of the Algonquin luncheon set, author of quirky little poems and sad little stories. More to the point, she had in a recent review called him a "hell-bent, cold-hearted writer" and meant it as praise. But public displays of adulation were less welcome. Hammett hated flamboyance; women should be self-possessed, controlled. Miss Wonderley never lost her cool.

It was a bad beginning, and although Hammett and Parker were closely associated for the rest of their lives, the relationship never much improved. As screenwriters in Hollywood in the 1930s, both enjoyed fat salaries for little work accomplished, and both spent the money frivolously, madly, as if ashamed to have it. Both drank too much, often in the same company, and they served together on committees for causes like Loyalist Spain, unionizing film writers, and combating anti-Semitism. Hammett admired her wit and her investigative talent for ferreting information out of people without their realizing it, but not her predilection for turning that information humorously yet treacherously against them. He could not reconcile her contradictions. Hellman, intimate friend of both, would try to intercede, but it was quite literally a case of Dash/Dot, Dot/Dash, opposing entities, and invariably when Parker came to visit, Hammett moved elsewhere for the duration. Sam Spade never went looking for trouble.

—Nancy Caldwell Sorel

*Eavesdropping on
American business talking to itself*

THE FIFTH ESTATE

BY DAVID OWEN

"IF THE BIRD IS TAME," FREUD WROTE, "I LIKE TO place him on a stand and then, while telling him what a good bird he is, I get behind him and lift one of his feet. . . . Birds which are not tame will generally require handling by two individuals with one holding the patient in a towel and the other doing the cutting."

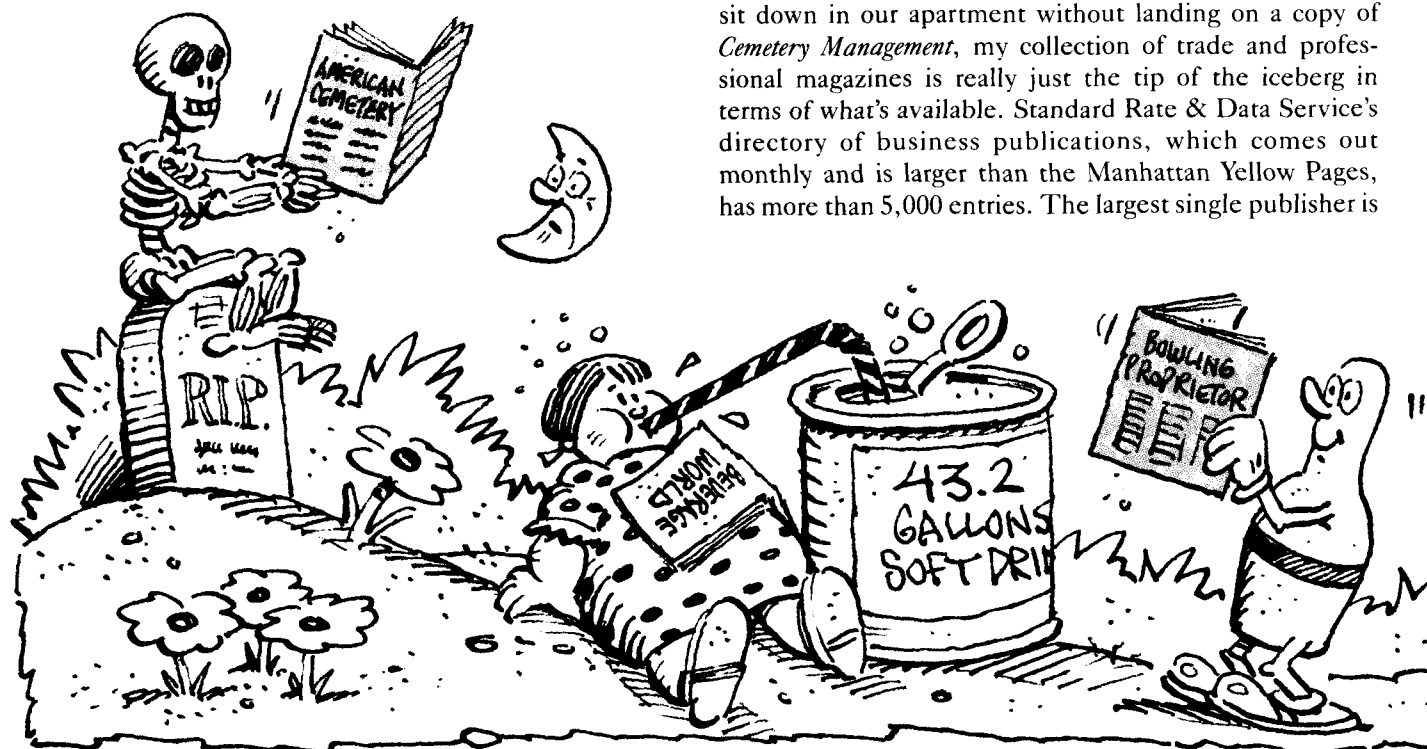
There's a lot more to it than that. I'm just touching on the major points. Before trying this yourself you'd want to read Arthur Freud's entire article, "Proper Nail Clipping of Birds," in the January issue of *PSM*. *PSM* is a magazine for pet-store owners. Its name stands for Pets Supplies Marketing. Say that aloud a few times and you'll understand why they use only the initials.

Let's see. On August 4, 1984, nearly 300 people in Las Vegas stood up and said, "Bowling belongs in the Olympic Games, and I pledge that I will do everything I can for that goal," according to *Bowling Proprietor*. The bowling indus-

try's Olympic aspirations are "rapidly becoming the talk of the town," the magazine says. Still, bowling lineage was down a bit in 1984. Perhaps hoping to reverse that trend, residents of Indiana last year contributed \$296 to B-PAC, the bowling political-action committee. B-PAC tries to entice politicians to adopt a more pro-bowling stance. One of its beneficiaries is my own congressman, Bill Green, of New York City, whose district contains exactly one bowling alley.

Here are a few of the magazines that are piled up on the table in my dining room: *Turkey World*, *Iron Age*, *American Carwash Review*, *National Jeweler* (edited by S. Lynn Diamond), *Fur Rancher*, *Lab Animal*, *Hosiery & Underwear*, *Weeds Trees & Turf* (incorporating *Golf Daily*), *Infections in Surgery*, *American Cemetery*. I also have *Kitchen & Bath Business*, *Ground Water Age*, *Beverage World* (the average American drank 43.2 gallons of soft drinks in 1984), *National Mall Monitor*, *Quick Frozen Foods*, *Lodging Hospitality*, *Hardware Age*, *The National Notary* ("Only in Florida, Maine and South Carolina may Notaries join couples in matrimony"), *Meat Plant*, *Pulp & Paper*, *Pizza Today*, and a couple of hundred others.

Although according to my wife it is now impossible to sit down in our apartment without landing on a copy of *Cemetery Management*, my collection of trade and professional magazines is really just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what's available. Standard Rate & Data Service's directory of business publications, which comes out monthly and is larger than the Manhattan Yellow Pages, has more than 5,000 entries. The largest single publisher is



Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, whose hundred or so titles include *Plastics Focus*, *Pit & Quarry*, and the brand-new *Food Sanitation*. Though little known outside their fields, such magazines can be enormously profitable. Last year Rupert Murdoch bought twelve of Ziff-Davis's trade magazines, including *Meetings & Conventions* and *Aerospace Daily*, for \$350 million.

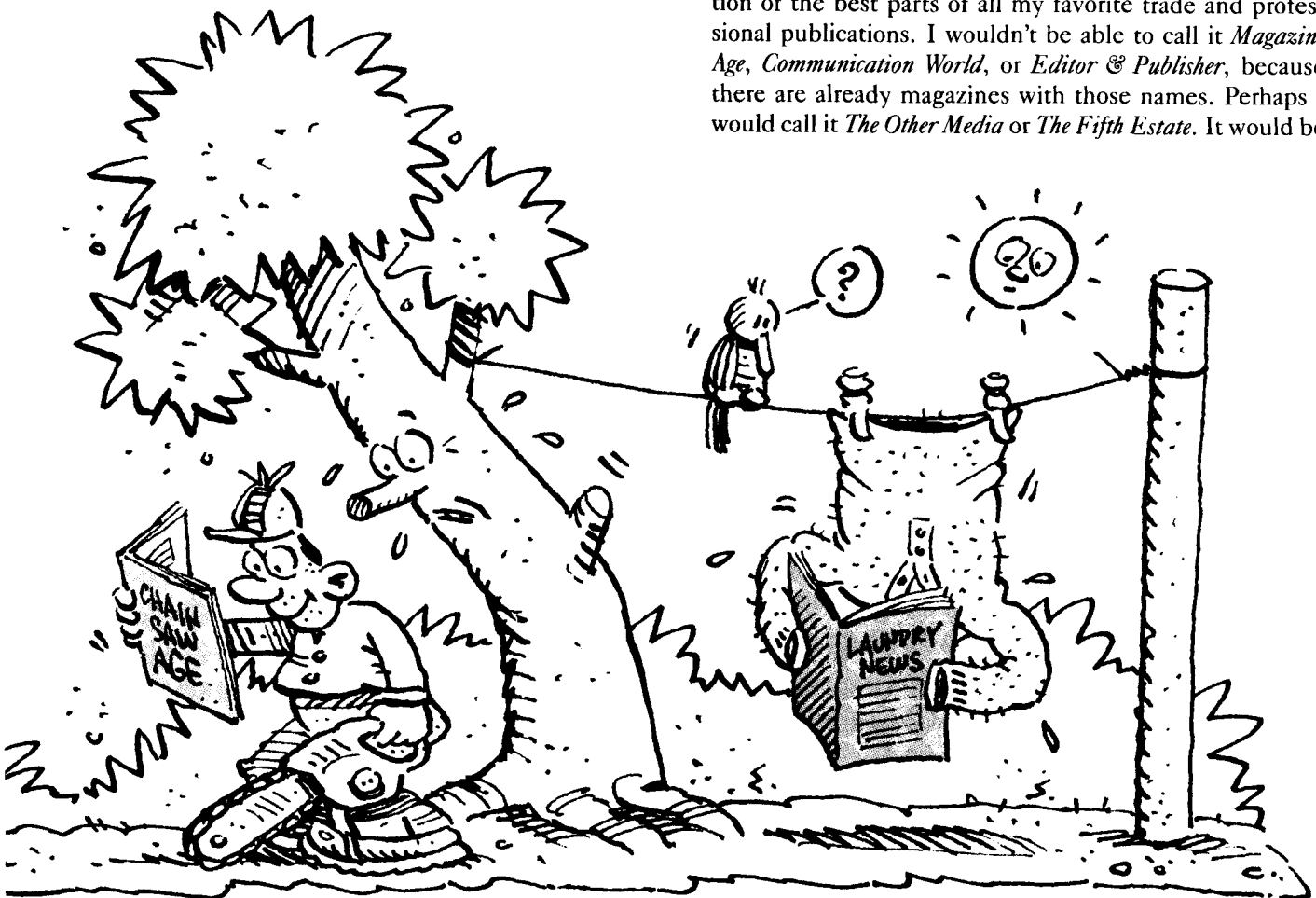
Rupert Murdoch notwithstanding, most trade magazines don't attract much public attention. When people talk about "the media," they are usually not referring to *Laundry News*. In fact, aside from the 15,387 people who receive it every month, how many Americans are even aware that there is an entire magazine devoted to laundry? (Actually, I saw in the February Standard Rate & Data directory that such magazines abound; they include *American Coin-Op*, *American Drycleaner*, *American Laundry Digest*, *Clean Scene Quarterly*, *Coin Launderer & Cleaner*, *Coinomatic Age*, *Drycleaners News*, *National Clothesline*, *New Era Laundry & Cleaning Lines*, *Textile Maintenance Reporter*, and *Western Cleaner & Launderer*.) The specialized focus of trade magazines assures their editors a certain privacy: they can speak to their readers with a candor that is impossible in the popular media. One could never find out from reading *Time* or *Newsweek*, for example, that people who make pretzels are considered to be somewhat boring by people who make potato chips. This is a fact that to the best of my

knowledge can be found in print nowhere except in the pages of *Snack Food*.

Before I started piling up trade magazines, I had a vague, free-floating sense—derived mostly from watching the evening news—that there were only about a dozen different jobs in the United States: my job, Dan Rather's job, the President's job, steelworking, farming, banking, law enforcement, driving taxis, several others. But now I realize that the economy is almost inconceivably various and that in addition to the occupations just mentioned there are jobs involving, for example, the building of clam bunk skidders, the marketing of feller-bunchers, and the repairing of log forks (*World Wood*). I also know that 42 percent of men believe that they have sensitive skin (*Progressive Grocer*) and that the 1973 Arab oil embargo, though disastrous for almost everybody else, was about the best thing that ever happened to the people who make chain saws (*Chain Saw Age*, not to be confused with *Chain Store Age*).

Trade and professional magazines make some of the most esoteric reading in the world. They are the forum where American business talks to itself. Flipping through them is like eavesdropping on private conversations.

IF KEEPING UP WITH ALL THESE MAGAZINES DIDN'T take so darned much time, I might be tempted to start a magazine of my own. It would be a sort of compilation of the best parts of all my favorite trade and professional publications. I wouldn't be able to call it *Magazine Age*, *Communication World*, or *Editor & Publisher*, because there are already magazines with those names. Perhaps I would call it *The Other Media* or *The Fifth Estate*. It would be



filled with page after page of arresting facts. For example:

- Coffee aroma consists of 100 to 200 volatile chemical compounds derived from the thermal degradation of primarily sucrose in the process of roasting the coffee bean. [*Tea and Coffee Trade Journal*]
- Astronaut Sally Ride's recent space mission not only advanced the space program, but also prosthetic dentistry. Material used to make her urinary catch device is now being used to make soft denture liners. [*Dental Management*]
- Some people call it polish. Others say class. We term it professionalism. Trying to sum up just what professionalism is, is somewhat like trying to define beauty or honesty. It's either there, or it isn't, but its presence adds a very special lustre. And Uniforms by Mindy has it. [*Uniforms & Accessories Review*]
- Ironically, Notaries are rarely seen in modern American dramas and musicals—although this nation has more Notaries than any other and their role is an important one. The reason is that the office of Notary is viewed as an auxiliary rather than a primary vocation in modern America (except in Louisiana, with its French heritage), and characters are identified by their primary vocations—as in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman." [*The National Notary*. This may be the world's most self-absorbed magazine. An article in a recent issue explained that Vanessa Williams lost her Miss America title because she "violated the morals provision of a notarized agreement."]
- Finally, combining the edible with the collectible, Freelance will introduce Goofy Pops[™], a lollypop on a "squiggly straw." The candy will be wrapped in a cellophane which will have a puffy sticker with roly eyes attached to it. Extra stickers will come with the Goofy Pop. [*Giftware Business*]

Every now and then my magazine would cover certain stories in greater depth. I might, for example, consider running an entire article about Goofy Pops, which in the taxonomy of giftware are classified as "stationery." (So are Mello Smello Mini Duffles, stick-on Mello Smello scratch-and-smell tattoos, Wild & Wacky Mello Smellos, Smell & Spell fragrant message stickers, and Smellopads.)

Stationery is a category of giftware, but it isn't the same thing as a gift. Before I started reading *Giftware Business*, I was a little confused on this point. Now I understand that a gift in the giftware sense isn't something like a fishing rod, a set of golf clubs, or anything else you wish someone would give you. Rather, it is something like a pewter figurine of a scuba diver, a tiny panda sculpted from "hydrostone," a pencil sharpener in the shape of a monkey standing in a shoe, or a ball-point pen packaged with a color-coordinated lady's bow tie. It is, in brief, a thing that no sensible person would ever buy for himself or herself. It is a thing that is generally thrown away shortly after it is received.

One place where people buy a lot of giftware (according

to a recent issue of *Souvenirs & Novelties*, a magazine whose readership overlaps somewhat with that of *Giftware Business*) is the souvenir shop at the Oklahoma City Zoo. (Another place is the gift shop at almost any hospital. In fact, hospital gift shops have their own trade magazine, called *Hospital Gift Shop Management*.) In an article titled "Zoo Shop Employees Create Functional Displays," Judy Rowe, the manager of the zoo shop, explains the secret of her success: "When someone walks in and asks for something penguin- or tiger-themed, we'll show the shopper whatever is currently in stock. We don't stop after showing one item. I prefer to take a few extra moments and make sure my customer is aware of everything—the plush, statues, and pictures." *Plush* is the giftware word for fuzzy stuffed things. According to *Giftware Business*, teddy bears led the plush list last year, "but lambs did pick up momentum."

The line between gifts and souvenirs is thin. Souvenirs are generally a bit less inhibited: a baseball cap covered with golf-ball-sized plastic peas and a huge plastic pat of melting butter; "underwear that's funtawear," from British Bulldog, Ltd.; toilet paper printed with sayings like "Show business is my life"; a pair of hat-wearing Maw and Paw 'Zarky Doodler Hillbilly Character Pens, sold in a "2-holer outhouse display-gift package"; Famous Amish Dolls; fake tomahawks made by Cherokee Indians from North Carolina ("We're on the warpath to bring you fast selling items that bring high profits for you!").

Cherokee tomahawks aside, gifts and souvenirs tend to be made on islands in the Pacific. This sometimes causes tension. An article in *Souvenirs & Novelties* discusses the perceived indelicacy of selling Japanese-made souvenirs in American battleship museums. The problem can usually be overcome. "In the past three years I have had only one person who, after discussing this issue, still refused to buy," reports Hattie Horton, the retail manager of the gift shop at Battleship Alabama Memorial Park.

If you just bought up your local battleship museum's entire supply of Bother Me greeting cards (for example, "It bothers me when you eat with your mouth open") but don't have anyone in particular you want to send them to, you might consider buying a mailing list consisting of the names of, say, all the people who between January and August of 1984 bought the phonograph record *Floyd Cramer Piano Favorites*, "featuring World Famous Love Songs and a Treasury of Favorites." There are 59,000 such people, 90 percent of them female. Finding out who they are costs fifty dollars per thousand names.

Selling names and addresses is a very big business. Popular lists, according to recent issues of *Direct Marketing* and *Fund Raising Management*, include people in the state of California who have rented or purchased wheelchairs, canes, walking chairs, or crutches; women who subscribed to *Redbook* after responding to a sweepstakes offer; members of the Association of Handicapped Artists; Americans "concerned about the growing Soviet military threat to peace"; buyers of the Thompson Chain Reference Bible; buyers of the Perry County Pizza Kit; and "people inter-

ested in the welfare of children and who support building character, teaching valuable skills, providing adequate education and suitable housing, along with developing networks to help abused, lost, stolen and abandoned children." (Another popular mailing list consists, apparently, of the names of people who subscribe to magazines dealing with popular mailing lists. Shortly after I began reading *Direct Marketing* and *Fund Raising Management*, I received a piece of junk mail urging me to buy three books by someone named Cecil C. Hoge, Sr.: *Mail Order Survival & Success*, *Mail Order Know-How*, and *Mail Order Moonlighting*.)



FOR A COUPLE OF SUMMERS WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE, I worked as a reporter for a trade magazine called *Milling & Baking News*. Shortly before I took the job, the magazine had come to something resembling national prominence by breaking the story on the famous Russian wheat deal—the Soviet Union's enormous purchase of American grain in 1972. For several weeks that year Walter Cronkite, *The New York Times*, and the rest of the popular media relied on *Milling & Baking News* for virtually all their information about the transaction. This information was uncannily accurate. The magazine's editor, Morton I. Sosland, was getting it from an anonymous source, who, Sosland gradually realized, was probably a Soviet official (the source always addressed Sosland as "Mr. Morton," something an American Deep Throat wouldn't do). Excitement about the wheat-deal story had mostly died down by the time I signed on, although work in the office was still occasionally disrupted by a British or Japanese television crew looking for an offbeat American feature story.

As is true of many trade publications, *Milling & Baking News* has a tiny circulation—just a little over 5,500. Even so, *The Wall Street Journal* once described the magazine as "indispensable" to its industry. Its influence derives not from the number of people who read it but from who those people are. About a fifth of the magazine's readers are the chief executives of milling or baking companies. Most of these people read every issue carefully, and advertisers pay a premium to reach them. A full-page, full-color ad in *Milling & Baking News* costs about \$2,500. That's not much money in absolute terms, but it works out to nearly half a dollar per subscriber, or about what it would cost to read the ad aloud to each one over the phone. A similar advertisement in *Time*, in contrast, has a cost per paying reader of less than three cents.

It is a general rule that the more carefully a trade maga-

zine is read by its trade, the more stultifying its content is to outsiders. Indispensable or not, *Milling & Baking News* is pretty grim reading for anyone who doesn't care deeply about milling and baking. "In the face [of] sharply higher prices last week," begins a typical article in a recent issue,

shortening business was very sluggish. Soybean oil for nearby jumped 2½@3¼c a lb on the heels of 1¼c gain the previous week. Deferred prices rose 1⅛@3⅞c. Virtually all other oil varieties also were considerably higher. Loose lard finished up 1½@2c and edible tallow gained 3⅜c. . . .

The magazine can keep this up for pages and pages. Still, trade writing is not without its charms. *Milling & Baking News's* use of the symbol @ in place of a dash in price ranges is, I believe, unique. The *News* is also the only publication I know of that consistently uses the word *firm* precisely. Most business writers treat *firm* as a synonym for *company* or *corporation*. It is not, in strict usage. A firm, according to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, is "a partnership of two or more persons not recognized as a legal person distinct from the members composing it." Editor Sosland—who once had a brand of flour named after him (Big Boy)—also maintains an idiosyncratic but absolute ban on the word *however*.

As a summer intern at *Milling & Baking News*, I wasn't qualified to write the dense grain-market analyses that are the heart of the magazine (I was, though, once allowed to contribute an editorial praising an astronaut who had smuggled a sandwich into outer space). My usual beat was much humbler: obituaries, new-product announcements, rewritten press releases. Most trade magazines depend heavily on press releases, often printing them verbatim. It was a matter of pride at *Milling & Baking News* that a press release was never run without our at least switching around the order of the clauses and changing all the "he stated"s to "he said"s.

New-product announcements are the most fascinating part of almost any food-related trade magazine. "Ex-Cel, a microcrystalline cellulose powder, adds bulk to food products without adding calories," the January issue of *Prepared Foods* reports. "When mixed with water, Ex-Cel forms a ribbon paste ideal for low-calorie spaghetti, macaroni and other formed products." Another issue of the same magazine announces "a fluid, oil-based coloring" ingredient that "yields a butter color on popcorn or extruded snacks." Butter color has what the prepared-food industry calls "eye appeal." A closely related concept is that of "mouthfeel," as in "Our formulary explains how to use Avicel MCC [another cellulose bulking additive] to make a coleslaw dressing with controlled flow, cling, and improved creaminess without sacrificing high-fat mouthfeel." (Eye appeal and mouthfeel are often difficult to improve without sacrificing yet another desirable quality—"consumer labeling appeal.")

Some of the most popular new food products are ones

that enable manufacturers to replace expensive ingredients. "HOW TO MILK CHOCOLATE," reads the headline on an advertisement in *Candy Industry* for Durkee's line of "coating fats," "cocoa butter equivalents," and other chocolate extenders and substitutes. A similar product is Viobin Cocoa Replacer, which, according to an announcement in the January issue of *Food Technology*, "is made from defatted wheat germ and 5% added carbohydrate which is pressure toasted to a rich brown. It is then ground to a fine powder which is similar in color and texture to processed cocoas."

Even better than new-product announcements are patents for new processes and ingredients. Here are a few garnered from recent issues of *Food Technology*:

U.S. 4,473,592. . . . Process for producing a meat-based product having a meat core of substantially constant cross-section of relatively dense compacted meat and an outer coating of fat which is mobile in the uniform state.

U.S. 4,477,476. . . . Method for converting salmon green eggs into a roe product in which the green egg is agitated in a saturated aqueous solution of salt containing a nitrite to impart a scarlet color, after which the salted egg is dried and agitated in a saturated aqueous solution of a malate containing sufficient nitrite to impart scarlet coloring.

U.S. 4,478,861. . . . Method of preparing a frozen food product in which a plurality of cooked pieces is treated to remove free water to form voids after which food mass is subjected to a freezing gas to surface freeze pieces while leaving some unfrozen moisture thereon. Dry powder additives are then introduced with agitation to uniformly coat pieces, after which they are fully frozen throughout and transferred to a storage container for later reconstitution.

Most people probably think they would never eat a frozen food product in which a plurality of cooked pieces had been treated to remove free water to form voids. But in fact almost everybody cheerfully eats stuff like this. Much of the food that is served in modern restaurants traces its ancestry directly to the patents page of *Food Technology*. "Pre-cooked," "pre-browned," and "portion-controlled" frozen-food items are "microwaved" and either "plated" immediately or, in the fancier establishments, gussied up with inexpensive "profit-makers" like olive bits or almond slivers before being "menued" as expensive, "signature" entrées. There isn't much need for chefs anymore. Kitchen technology has advanced to the point at which a pre-browned slice of portion-controlled prime rib can be microwaved in a minute or two and then kept in a holding oven for eight hours or more without losing eye appeal.

THE WIDE AND VARIED WORLD

Women, women, what do they want?

The first ones in the door of the plant-filled office were the twins, fresh from the upper grades, their matched coats dangling open.

And then their more compliant brother, leading the dear stuffed tottering creature—amazing that she could lift her leg high enough to cross the threshold to the waiting-room.

Then the woman, the patient, carrying the baby in an infant seat, his every inch of flesh swaddled against the vicious weather. Once inside, how skillfully the mother unwound the many layers—

and now so quickly

must restore them: news from the lab has passed through the nurse's sliding window. The youngest, strapped again into his shell, fusses for the breast, the twins tease their sister, the eight-year-old looks almost wise as his mother struggles into her coat with one hand and with the other

pinches his sweaty neck, her hissed threats swarming his face like flies.

Now she's gone.

The women remaining don't need to speak. Outside, snow falls in the streets and quiet hills, and seems, in the window, framed by the room's continuous greenery, to obliterate the wide and varied world.

We half-smile, half-nod to one another.

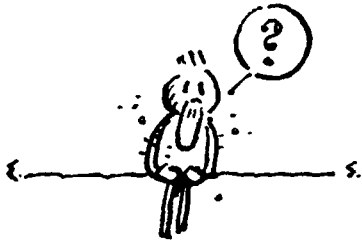
One returns to her magazine.

One shifts gently to the right arm her sleeping newborn, unfurls the bud of its hand.

One of us takes her turn in the inner office where she submits to the steel table and removes from her body its stubborn wish.

We want what you want, only we have to want it more.

—Ellen Bryant Voigt



“**E**YE APPEAL,” ACCORDING TO AN ADVERTISEMENT in the January issue of *The Director*, “is still the main reason people buy!” The ad is for “Aurora’s new 18 gauge 1500 shell with accent stripes. . . . This new ACCENT series features a stripe on the top and base moldings that color coordinates with the shell finish. Notice how the interior shade completes this color combination. The striping has been market tested and found to be widely accepted.” The ACCENT series also features “adjustable bed, seam welded bottom, metal gimp and material-lined foot end.”

Aurora is the Aurora Casket Company, of Aurora, Indiana. *The Director* is the official publication of the National Funeral Directors Association. Food-related publications are a lot of fun, but for pure, bone-chilling enjoyment there’s nothing like a funeral magazine. *The Director*, *Casket & Sunnyside*, *American Funeral Director*, *Stone in America* (gravestones, that is), *Cemetery Management*, *Morticians of the Southwest*, *American Cemetery*, *Southern Funeral Director*—if I had to choose a single trade magazine to accompany me into an 18-gauge 1500 shell, it would probably be one of these.

“Silver Taupe with Ash Grey Crepe interior, it does sound exciting, doesn’t it?” Gene C. Hunter, the president of the Marshfield Casket Company, asks in a recent issue of *Morticians of the Southwest*. “More families are wanting caskets with new interior designs that are different and stand out over others.”

A modern casket is a remarkable piece of merchandise. It is the single most expensive piece of furniture that many people will ever own, yet its only real function is to be lowered into the ground and covered with dirt. Its numerous optional features serve no purpose except to increase the final bill. With racing stripes, or plain? How firm a Sealy mattress? Should the interior upholstery coordinate or contrast with the exterior finish? Persuading grieving relatives to buy these unnecessary amenities is known to the trade as “loading the casket.” It is the mainstay of the funeral business.

Many expensive casket features are seemingly meant to prevent or delay what has already occurred. Batesville caskets are treated with “an exclusive Chemgard coating” intended to provide “additional protection,” according to advertisements in various funeral magazines. Marshfield’s premium Signature caskets (the Monarch Blue, the West Coast Blue, and the Silver Taupe) offer a “one-piece rubber gasket” and a “50-Year Warranty.” Belmont’s Bronze Masterpiece caskets are protected by “a lustrous 4-millimeter, twice-baked, hand-rubbed Dupont finish” applied

over a generous coat of “Dupont Adhesion Promoting Primer.” Batesville’s Sapphire, Mediterranean, and Tourmaline models have both inner and outer lids, the better to protect a loved one from—well, from what?

Loading the casket doesn’t stop with the casket. Most caskets, even ones with two lids, aren’t buried in the ground; they’re buried in other caskets, known as vaults. Wilbert’s Monticello, Continental, Venetian, and Triune models (with Strentex and Marbelon liners) all provide “the very finest in underground protection.” According to an ad in *The Director*, Wilbert tests these vaults in an “immersing tank” that subjects them to

a side wall force of over 18,000 pounds at a depth of twelve feet. In another test, a freeze/thaw machine takes Wilbert burial vaults to temperatures of 30° below zero. And Wilbert’s instrumented burial vault provides accurate technical data from a Wilbert burial vault buried at a normal depth, through sensing devices attached to an external digital readout device.

Sozonian’s top-of-the-line vault is made of twelve-gauge steel and “designed like a real I-Beam to give it plenty of self-supporting strength”; optional “‘Electro-Shield’ protection” is also available.

Another profit-maker for funeral directors is burial clothing. “A Thing of Beauty, a Joy Forever” is the motto of Willingham Tailoring Company, manufacturers of funeral dresses and jobbers of burial underpants. Morticians can also order the second revised edition of *Desaiology: Hair-styling for the Deceased*.

It’s all an elaborate rip-off. And yet these magazines are fascinating, no? The best of them is *American Funeral Director*, a monthly journal that contains, in addition to advertisements for caskets, vaults, burial clothes, and other paraphernalia (including SnFF, the non-formaldehyde arterial chemical that “has no smell!”, and King Tut, the popular cavity fluid from Egyptian Chemical & Funeral Supply), articles with headlines like “LUNG CANCER IN WOMEN UP 152.6% IN TENNESSEE,” “FIND BONES IN ATTIC,” and “JOB-RELATED DEATHS HIT RECORD LOW IN ’83” (I’ve got some good news and some bad news). A chart in the February issue reveals that Hawaii, Nevada, Rhode Island, and South Dakota suffered no weather-related deaths in 1983, while Texas led the nation, with sixty-six. Like all good trade magazines, *American Funeral Director* is obsessed with its subject; unlike most trade magazines, it has a subject that lends itself to obsession.

Reading the funeral magazines can be a peculiar experience. They make mortality seem simultaneously vivid and unreal: vivid because nothing could be more vivid than a bottle of SnFF, unreal because you can almost begin to believe that the color or texture of the inside of your casket is something that might one day make a difference to you. As Freud wrote, “No one believes in his own death.”

That’s the other Freud, incidentally—the one who didn’t know anything about birds. □

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MUSIC

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER THEM BY

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

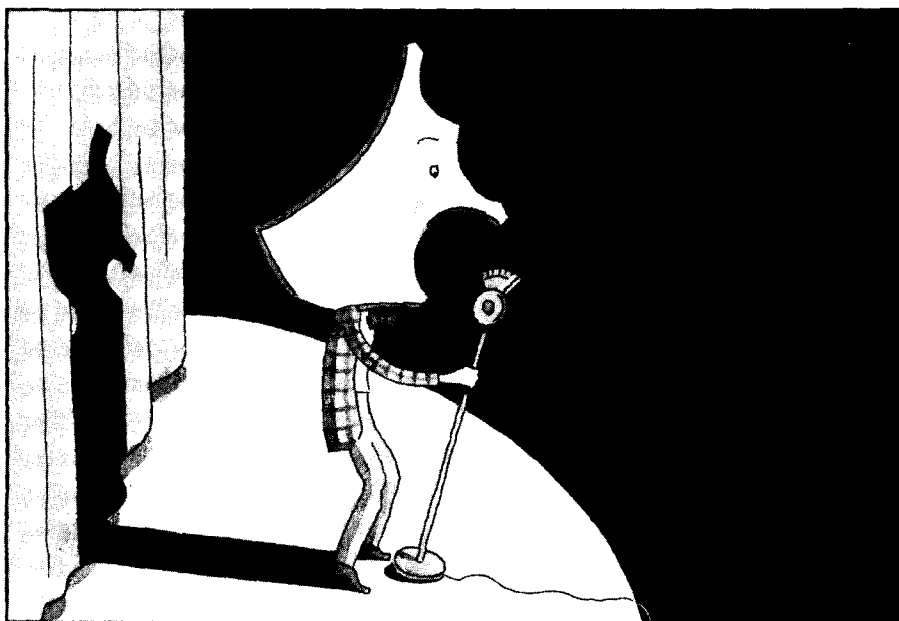
THE DECLINE of the operetta as the model for the Broadway musical, the displacement of belters by crooners when improvements in amplification rendered moot the question of a singer's projection, the impact of jazz and blues on popular music, the gradual and perhaps inevitable gentrification of a once virile idiom as the songs of the twenties, thirties, and forties—no longer “popular” in any true sense—fell into the domain of performers more inclined to treat them as art songs or period camp . . . these are a few of the themes that pervade the Smithsonian Institution's *American Popular Song: Six Decades of Songwriters and Singers*, a lavishly packaged set of seven records (and a 152-page booklet) surveying the achievements of American popular composers, lyricists, and vocalists in the fifty years between Victrolas grinding out ragtime in the parlor in the teens and transistor radios blaring rock-and-roll on the beach in the late 1950s.

Many of the songs and performers that the producer, J. R. Taylor, and his consultants, Dwight Blocker Bowers and James R. Morris, have chosen flout conventional wisdom. The singer most prominently featured, for example, is Fred Astaire, who has nine selections; Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, Judy Garland, and Nat “King” Cole have five apiece. The composer taking top honors is Harold Arlen, represented by an even dozen songs (“Over the Rainbow” and “One for My Baby” not among them, surprisingly)—two more than Richard Rodgers, three more than George Gershwin, four more than Irving Berlin, and six more than Hoagy Carmichael, Jerome Kern, or Cole Porter. This elevation of Astaire and Arlen proves as astute as it is unexpected. Astaire's singing, no less than his dancing, epitomizes equilibrium and nonchalance—states of being that all pop singers strive for, or should. Arlen, who

celebrated his eightieth birthday last February, has never enjoyed the cachet of Gershwin, Kern, Richard Rodgers, or Porter, perhaps because he lacks their pedigree as men of the theater, perhaps because his melodies seem artless next to theirs. It has been Arlen's fate to be extolled as a craftsman rather than as an innovator. Yet he has probably given us more great songs than any other American songwriter, and he was more successful than his contemporaries in catching the sass and fervor of blues and early jazz. Because Astaire and Arlen spread their favors around so generously, they cover a lot of the collection's territory all by themselves. Astaire glides through the songs of Berlin (“Cheek to Cheek,” “Isn't This a Lovely Day,” and the unbowlerized “Puttin' On the Ritz,” which also features a tap chorus), Gershwin (“They Can't Take That Away From Me” and “Fascinatin' Rhythm,” the latter a duet with Adele Astaire, with the composer on piano), Kern (“A Fine Romance”), Porter (“Night and Day”), Arthur Schwartz (“By Myself”), and Johnny Mercer (“Something's Gotta Give”). Arlen's collaborations with lyricists as different in sensibility as Mercer, Ted Koehler, E. Y. “Yip” Harburg, Truman

Capote, and Ira Gershwin provide choice material for several generations of singers, including Jack Teagarden (“I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues”), Lena Horne (“Stormy Weather” and “As Long As I Live”), Judy Garland (“Get Happy” and “The Man That Got Away”), Ella Fitzgerald (“Blues in the Night”), Mabel Mercer (“My Shining Hour”), Mel Tormé (“When the Sun Comes Out”), Tony Bennett (“A Sleepin' Bee” and “Last Night When We Were Young”), Joe Williams (“Come Rain or Come Shine”), and Aretha Franklin (a delightful “Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive”).

Dominant though their contributions may be, Astaire and Arlen hardly monopolize *American Popular Song*. There are other riches here as well, beginning with Sophie Tucker's 1910 Edison cylinder recording of “Some of These Days,” a likably bravura if rhythmically stilted performance that stands in sharp contrast to the track that follows it: Bessie Smith's supple declamation of Berlin's “Alexander's Ragtime Band,” with the jazz musicians Fletcher Henderson, Coleman Hawkins, Joe Smith, and Jimmy Harrison providing backup. The jazz phrasing is a portent of sweeping changes to come. Although the majority of the songs included on these discs were written in the 1930s and none after 1955, the arbitrary cutoff date, no fewer than forty-six of the 110 selections were recorded after 1955, testifying to the longevity of the best popular songs (and, perhaps, to the role of the long-playing album in that longevity: artists needed songs to fill up space). Among the most



Francis Davis, who writes about jazz for The Philadelphia Inquirer, is at work on a collection of essays on contemporary jazz musicians.

beguiling moments on the seven-record set are performances by vintage recording stars whose names one rarely hears anymore—the archetypal crooner Gene Austin (an unsaccharine “My Melancholy Baby”), the versatile twenties coloratura Marion Harris (“After You’ve Gone,” “I Ain’t Got Nobody,” and a plaintive, flawless “The Man I Love”), and the band singer Irene Taylor (a snazzy “Willow, Weep for Me,” with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra). The four Bing Crosby selections are especially well chosen, in that they reveal Crosby’s debt to Al Jolson and vaudeville while demonstrating what distinguished Crosby from his predecessors—the frank eroticism of his phrasing and his feeling for jazz (the violinist Joe Venuti and the guitarist Eddie Lang are assumed by the producers to be among the unidentified sidemen on the stirring, attractively hoarse 1931 broadcast version of “I’m Through With Love”). Frank Sinatra’s “I’ve Got You Under My Skin,” Judy Garland’s “The Man That Got Away,” and Billie Holiday’s “You Go to My Head” retain their power no matter how many times one has heard them already, perhaps all the more for the mixture of firsthand and inherited memories they call into play. But the major revelation on the anthology is “Dancing on the Ceiling,” by the under-appreciated Jeri Southern—a gossamer and oddly sibilant 1952 rendering of Lorenz Hart’s fragile lyric that achieves confidentiality without coyness or emotional guile. It’s an inspired selection, especially in light of Sinatra’s justifiably famous recording of the tune, commonly thought to be the definitive interpretation.

American Popular Song also contains a share of bland-to-meretricious performances: overzealous attempts to tell a story in song by the arrangers Lalo Schiffrin and Pete Rugolo (Sarah Vaughan and Nat Cole are their respective victims); oleaginous ballads by the feckless male ingenues Russ Columbo, Buddy Clark, Johnny Mathis, Gordon MacRae, and the young Perry Como; and arch recitations by Portia Nelson, Elaine Stritch, Eileen Farrell, and Barbara Cook, who bring the curse of gentility to everything they touch. Worse, however, are the many sins of omission. Two numbers each by Billie Holiday and Ethel Waters hardly seems sufficient, but these paradigmatic stylists at least fare better than Louis Armstrong, Mildred Bailey, Connie Boswell, Billie Eckstine, and Jack Teagarden, each limited to one appear-

ance—to say nothing of Lee Wiley, Ruth Etting, Maxine Sullivan, Johnny Hartman, Helen Humes, and Ray Charles, who are ignored altogether. The compilers show a regrettable aversion to “list” songs of the type popular in the 1930s. “How About You,” “These Foolish Things,” and “Thanks for the Memory” are admittedly irresistible more for their wordplay than for their melodic contours or harmonic underpinnings, but they are irresistible nonetheless. They translate romantic longing into the imagery of everyday distractions—potato chips, moonlight, and motor trips; a cigarette that bears a lipstick’s traces; stockings in the basin when a fellow needs a shave. The vital contributions of journeyman songwriting teams like Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin, and Jules Styne and Sammy Cahn are given short shrift or left out. Duke Ellington, a great jazz composer but only an indifferent pop songwriter, is well represented, but Fats Waller, Eubie Blake, and James P. Johnson are missing. And where is Matt Dennis? After all, the question of whether Dennis’s “Angel Eyes” is a great song is finally academic; it’s a great song when Frank Sinatra sings it, and Sinatra’s touchstone recording of it should have been included, along with Louis Armstrong’s jolting interpretation of Waller’s “Black and Blue.”

THE SMITHSONIAN’S *American Popular Song* can be considered the stepchild of the late Alec Wilder’s revisionary 1972 book of the same name. Although Wilder, a gifted songwriter if hardly a prolific one, is included on the records only twice, his sensibility is apparent in most of the selections. Taylor, Bowers, and Morris share Wilder’s fundamentalist approach to the popular song, prizing composers over lyricists and relegating vocalists to a custodial position—they identify the melodist as auteur. But like commercial filmmaking, pop songwriting during the half century covered by this collection was usually collaborative. The ingenious verse of Lorenz Hart, for example, gave the early melodies of Richard Rodgers their cosmopolitan sparkle and not the other way around, if we can draw conclusions from the sententious melodies Rodgers later appended to the chamber-of-commerce pronouncements of Oscar “the corn is as high as an elephant’s eye” Hammerstein II. Likewise, even though Jerome Kern is reputed to have treated his lyricists like paid employees, Doro-

thy Fields and Johnny Mercer brought to Kern songs such as “A Fine Romance” and “I’m Old-Fashioned” an idiomatic verve missing from most of Kern’s output, whatever its other charms. Even Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, who wrote their own lyrics, frequently custom-tailored their melodies to flatter the singers (and, in some cases, the vocally restricted singing actors) who introduced the songs in films and shows. With the exception of Kern and possibly Gershwin (frustrated “serious” composers, like Wilder), the great American songwriters were seldom as intractable as their latter-day champions.

Wilder, despite his enthusiasm for Billie Holiday, Lee Wiley, and Mildred Bailey, was ambivalent about vocal improvisation, saving his highest accolades for singers who took few liberties with songs. Still, I find it surprising that jazz singers are so poorly represented on *American Popular Song*, given that Taylor—a former jazz critic and a good one—had a hand in the selection. It has been largely through the efforts of jazz singers, cavalier though their disregard of melodic text may sometimes be, that the hit tunes of former decades have endured as standards. Although jazz instrumentalists turn up in great numbers as accompanists on *American Popular Song*, it might have been fitting also to include a few strictly instrumental performances, such as Coleman Hawkins’s “Body and Soul,” Charlie Parker’s “Embraceable You,” Lester Young’s “These Foolish Things,” and Thelonious Monk’s “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” if only to demonstrate how pop songs have provided malleable raw material for harmonic investigation.

I would also quarrel with the 1955 cut-off date. Granted, most of the memorable songs written since then have been rock-and-roll or soul tunes associated exclusively with the original performers—great records rather than great songs. And granted, for the past thirty years Broadway show tunes have had to delineate character and further plot, which explains why so few of them have enjoyed a life off the stage. Yet “Send In the Clowns” from Stephen Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music* and the title song from his *Anyone Can Whistle* have managed to enter the standard repertoire, and so (with an assist from Frank Sinatra) has John Kander and Fred Ebb’s rousing anthem “New York, New York,” from the Martin Scorsese film musical *maudit* of the same name. These three

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songs deserve places on the Smithsonian's honor roll, as do less frequently performed Sondheim oratorios such as "Losing My Mind," from *Follies*, "Good Thing Going," from the ill-fated *Merrily We Roll Along*, and "There Won't Be Trumpets," which was dropped from *Anyone Can Whistle* during out-of-town tryouts. Room might also have been found for such relatively recent examples of inspired hackwork as Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn's "Call Me Irresponsible" and Johnny Mandel and Paul Francis Webster's "The Shadow of Your Smile," and for such diverting rock-era oddities as the Flamingos' haunting renovation of "I Only Have Eyes for You," any of the innumerable doo-wop versions of "Stormy Weather," Frankie Lymon's heartfelt renderings of Rube Bloom's "Fools Rush In" and "Out in the Cold Again," and the British rock singer Bryan Ferry's fiendishly syncopated mid-seventies take on "These Foolish Things."

But enough. My differences of opinion vanish whenever *American Popular Song* is actually on my turntable. This is an invaluable collection of the songs and performances that ritualized mid-century American attitudes toward sex, courtship, infidelity, leisure, affluence, and aspiration. In the mid-nineteenth century, when Walt Whitman declared that he heard America singing, he was speaking metaphorically. But the sentiment is frequently taken at face value nowadays: America finds its clearest voice in robust carols of labor and fellowship (witness the periodic vogue for folk and ethnic music among leftists, and the current ideological tug-of-war over Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A."). However, Americans, at least since the invention of machines that can do their singing for them, have generally eschewed celebrations of labor and fellowship in favor of escapist fantasies of the good life and complaints of loneliness and despair.

This is not necessarily the evidence of decadence that hard-line critics of popular culture would have it be. It was from the urbane and sometimes frivolous songs of Gershwin, Berlin, Rodgers, Kern, Porter, and Arlen (and from the equally frivolous stage and film musicals for which they wrote many of those songs) that those of us born on the bottom of the pile, or near the middle, first gained a clue to how the other half lived. Often enough the music-makers were themselves living proof that dreams can

come true—up-from-the-masses composers and lyricists and singers all helping to free Tin Pan Alley from the rigid conventions of the past. It was a democratic place in which a Jewish immigrant like Irving Berlin could write best-loved songs for Christian and patriotic holidays, white singers like Sophie Tucker and Marion Harris could sway to the rhythms of black composers like Shelton Brooks ("Some of These Days") and Turner Layton ("After You've Gone"), homosexual lyricists like Lorenz Hart and Cole Porter could trigger the images that reminded fighting men of their girls back home, and the slumming rich and the social-climbing average Joe could rub elbows, if only for the duration of a song. *American Popular Song* belongs in every popular-music record library, as much for the unofficial history it conveys as for the bounteous musical pleasure it affords. □

American Popular Song: Six Decades of Songwriters and Singers, also available on cassette, from Smithsonian Collection of Recordings, Box 10230, Des Moines, Iowa 50336. Price: \$47.96 plus \$2.89 postage and handling.

BRAHMS AS MODERNIST

BY WILLIAM YOUNGREN

IN HER ONCE POPULAR 1959 novel *Aimez-vous Brahms?* the French writer Françoise Sagan used the music of the great German composer to represent everything easy, sentimental, "romantic"—everything rightly rejected by the book's sophisticated, world-weary, very modern heroine, Paule. In a brilliant essay published in the Winter, 1977, issue of the magazine *Salmagundi*, "Aimez-vous Brahms? Reflections on Modernism," the historian Peter Gay showed that although the Sagan-Paule view of Brahms is more or less the prevailing one today, Brahms was viewed very differently in his own time. Most of his first critics found his music forbiddingly difficult and learned, lacking in direct sensuous appeal, even arid. It was, Gay reminded us, the difficult, learned,

William Youngren teaches English at Boston College. He writes on music regularly for The Atlantic.

perhaps even arid modernist composer Schoenberg who in 1947 wrote a long and admiring essay called, of all things, "Brahms the Progressive."

One reason it is easy for Americans to think of Brahms as a sentimental Romantic with a strong traditionalist streak is that the works of his most often heard in this country are the ones that involve full orchestra: the four symphonies, the two concertos for piano and the one for violin, the *Academic Festival* and *Tragic* overtures, the Haydn Variations, and the German Requiem. The rich, smooth sound of a modern symphony orchestra invites the listener to overlook everything in Brahms that is difficult and strange, quirky and obstinate—everything his contemporaries responded to with such distaste. Occasionally Brahms's songs and short piano pieces show up on recital programs, but his chamber music, while popular in Europe, is comparatively neglected here. When Time-Life issued a series of records representing the great composers, the sets devoted to Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven each contained a string quartet or two, but the Brahms set contained no chamber music at all. Yet Brahms's chamber music is his most representative body of work, offering the clearest proof that his early critics, while understandably too hard on him, were on the right track, and that Schoenberg was dead right in taking him as a "progressive" composer, a genuine precursor of modernism.

Brahms wrote more chamber music than he did instrumental music of any other sort. All told, the twenty-four surviving chamber works make up almost exactly a quarter of his total output. D. F. Tovey, in his 1929 essay "Brahms's Chamber Music," estimated that Brahms, a ruthlessly self-critical man with a sharp eye on posterity, probably wrote about four times as much chamber music as he permitted to survive and be published. In other words, there was once as much Brahms chamber music as there now is of Brahms's music in all genres—enough to fill about sixty LP records.

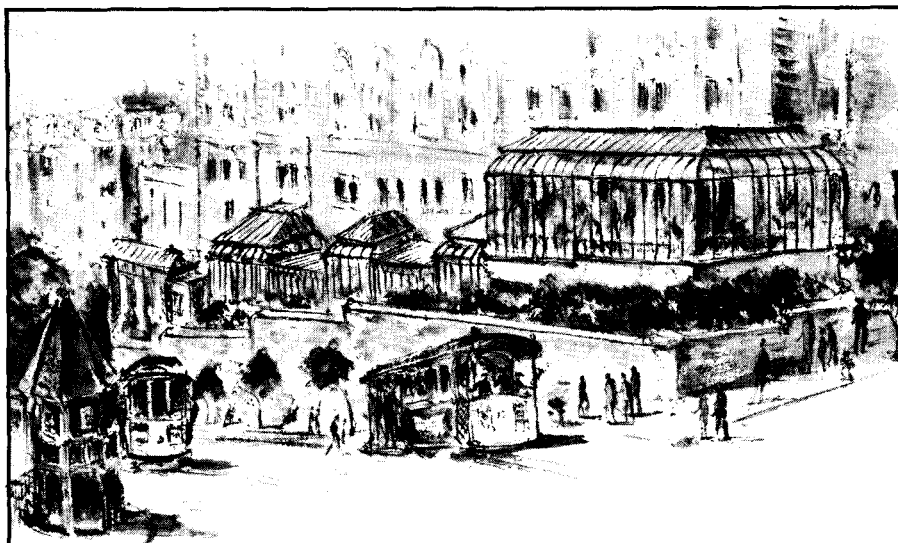
Moreover, although Brahms's symphonies all reached their final form within about a decade, his surviving chamber music spanned virtually his whole career—from the B Major Trio, Op. 8, published in 1854, when he was twenty-one, to the Clarinet Sonatas, Op. 120, which date from 1895, two years before his death. Unlike his great classical and Romantic predecessors, Brahms did not

write a continuing body of longer works for solo piano. After the three early sonatas, Opp. 1, 2, and 5, and the Scherzo, Op. 4, his writing for the piano was confined to short pieces. Therefore it is only in the chamber music that we can follow in detail the central effort of Brahms's creative life: his attempt to re-work and reinstate the sonata forms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to provide an alternative to the seemingly formless "endless melody" of Wagnerian music-drama.

BRAHMS WAS VERY secretive about his working methods, and systematically destroyed not only the finished works he decided were not worthy of publication but also sketches for the ones he did publish. It is therefore most fortunate that in 1889 he revised—re-composed, really—the Op. 8 Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello. Both versions are beautifully performed by the Odeon Trio on the two-disc Quintessence set 2PMC-2716; comparing them reveals a great deal about Brahms's development.

Of the work's four movements, Brahms left only the second, the scherzo, virtually untouched, merely tightening and clarifying its ending. In the other three movements he left the primary material more or less intact but then completely reworked the contrasting secondary material—the "second groups" of the expositions and recapitulations, the development sections, the conclusions. In every case he heightened dramatic contrast by substituting for the rather placid music of the early version music that is disturbed, urgent, mysterious. The resulting work is not only more concise than the original one—indeed, it is shorter by more than a third—but also more intense, more exploratory, more spacious emotionally. Some critics, perhaps letting their knowledge come between them and the music, have found the contrast between the youthful Brahms, open and melodically free, and the later, more troubled and introverted Brahms too great to be successfully embodied in a single work. But the new music grows organically out of the old, and I doubt that anyone who did not know the work's history would be disconcerted. Brahms's development was so unified and so continuous, his later self so clearly latent in his earlier one, that the revised trio, while not one of his greatest works, nonetheless seems whole and complete.

It is fascinating to follow the course of



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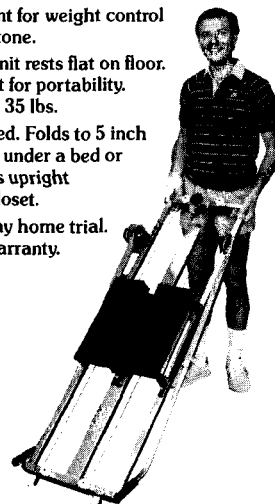
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that development in the chamber works, to hear Brahms extending and deepening his emotional range while perfecting his grasp of form. In the Op. 40 Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano (1865) he for once completely abandoned sonata form in the opening movement. Instead he created a series of alternating episodes in which the pastoral simplicity evoked by the horn's sonority contrasts with restlessness and turbulence. The third movement is a darkly powerful elegy in which horn and violin wander off into brief solos of unappeased bleakness that suggest the Mahler of forty years later.

The C Minor String Quartet, Op. 51, No. 1 (1873), was the first that Brahms saw fit to publish, though evidently he had written and destroyed several earlier ones. It is a work of great terseness and even ferocity. The surging theme with which the first movement opens breaks down almost immediately into short, rhythmically ambiguous fragments, bringing us to a dead stop and a contrasting episode before we are more than a few bars into the work. The third movement, instead of being the usual scherzo or minuet in three-four time, is a restless and disorienting piece with the unusual time signature of four-eight. Only in the trio do we move into three-four, for a little country dance that seems to come from an alien, much earlier world.

The Op. 78 Violin Sonata in G, composed in 1878 to 1879, is also the first of its genre that Brahms published, but Tovey tells us that it was preceded by at least four others that Brahms destroyed. Seemingly a freer and more open work than the C Minor Quartet, it keeps relapsing into tentativeness and obliquity, movingly dramatizing the difficulty of direct, heartfelt speech. Finally there is the Op. 115 Clarinet Quintet (1891), one of Brahms's very greatest works. Instead of pitting the clarinet against the string ensemble, as was usual in pieces for this combination, Brahms thoroughly integrated it into the ensemble, interweaving clarinet and string lines in ever new combinations, so as to create an affecting kaleidoscope of textures.

Schoenberg in his penetrating essay was occupied solely with technical procedures. It is rather the expressive consequences of these procedures that are mainly of interest to the ordinary listener. The asymmetrical phrase construction, the complexity of motivic development and intervallic relation, the pervasive harmonic and metrical ambi-

guity, the frequent blurring of formal boundaries—all of these, duly noted by Schoenberg, combine to create a music that is highly crafted on its surface and deeply convoluted beneath, dense and even knotted and contorted, by turns reticent and touchingly forthright. Though often obscure and difficult to follow, it almost always gives the impression of having something of the greatest importance to communicate.

TO EXPECT in Brahms the comparative directness and spontaneity of utterance that we ordinarily encounter in Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and even Schumann is to miss the point. Brahms's is an art of indirection, allusion, ambiguity. A reader of English



literature might well compare it to the art of James's late novels, or to the best poetry of Arnold and Tennyson and even the early Eliot. To love Brahms is to be deeply engaged by the constant tension between the elaborate surface of his music and the feeling that it half expresses, half conceals—feeling occasionally communicated directly by fleeting evocations of a pastoral and religious world in which greater spontaneity and directness were, perhaps, possible. Words like *wit* and *elegance*, so often applicable to the music of Brahms's classical and Romantic predecessors, are rarely applicable to his. When he lightened his textures, it was usually not to become more sociable but rather to become more private, retreating into a childlike fantasy world.

Thanks to the celebration, in 1983, of

the 150th anniversary of Brahms's birth, two complete recordings of his chamber music are now available: Philips 6768 146 and Deutsche Grammophon 2740 277, the latter a volume of a more or less complete, sixty-two-disc "Brahms Edition." I would recommend the Philips set, which features the Beaux Arts Trio, the Quartetto Italiano, the violinist Arthur Grumiaux, the cellist János Starker, and players drawn from the Berlin Philharmonic. The finest of the performances in the Deutsche Grammophon set, the Op. 34 Piano Quintet done by Maurizio Pollini and the Quartetto Italiano, and the clarinet works done by the great clarinetist Karl Leister, are also available on single discs. In addition, there are fine recent recordings by the Guarneri Quartet, the cellist Leonard Rose, and the horn players Barry Tuckwell and Alan Civil, and classic older ones by the Budapest Quartet and the Busch Quartets and by the clarinetist Reginald Kell.

Besides reading Tovey's essay, which is included in *"The Main Stream of Music" and Other Essays*, anyone interested in Brahms should look at the standard critical biography, Karl Geiringer's 1934 *Brahms: His Life and Work*, and at an excellent recent book, Walter Frisch's *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, published last year by the University of California Press. Frisch's illuminating analyses make clear exactly why Schoenberg saw Brahms as a progressive or even proto-modernist composer, demonstrate the crucial role played by the chamber music in Brahms's development, and also suggest that listeners returning to the familiar orchestral works with a knowledge of the chamber music will find them both richer and more disquieting than before.

A quarter century ago Mahler, thanks largely to the popularizing efforts of Leonard Bernstein, became established in this country as a turn-of-the-century composer who speaks to the anxieties and uncertainties of our own time. Brahms—the real Brahms, not the *Aidez-vous Brahms?* stereotype—speaks to us even more meaningfully. His language is at first more difficult to understand than Mahler's, but his grasp of form is far surer, his relation to musical tradition richer and more provocative, his music free of Mahler's disconcerting, though endearing, vulgarities. A popular re-evaluation of Brahms would seem to be long overdue. □

FOOD

BEST PART OF THE PIE

BY CORBY KUMMER

MEMORIES OF gluttony often inspire cooks, and the memory of my mother's pie crust has driven me to pursue the elusive art of making pastry. Nothing could be more satisfying, to my mind, than the crunch of a crust whose layers break in the mouth, adding savory bite to a sweet fruit filling. At parties where the dessert is pie, I watch other people's plates, waiting for somebody to leave the rolled edge. This glorious, most crackly morsel of all is what I used to pinch from leftover pie at our house, hoping that my theft would be attributed to a clumsily handled knife.

I couldn't understand why so many cooks refuse to make their own crusts until I started trying to make them the way my mother did—a skill, family legend has it, that she acquired by baking pies every night for a month. I soon realized why the majority of crusts one is served are bits of white paste from which one scrapes fruit (which more often than not is overcooked and syrupy). Making crusts isn't easy. I was progressing well last winter using *The Complete Book of Pastry*, by Bernard Clayton, Jr., and *As Easy as Pie*, by Susan G. Purdy, when I happened on a demonstration of pastry-making given by Flo Braker, whose splendid book *The Simple Art of Perfect Baking* had just been published. Now I don't smile sympathetically when people tell me that they would rather buy a crust than face the chore of making and rolling one. I tell them how to do it right.

TWO PRINCIPLES underlie all the fetishes that cooks say will produce a perfect pie crust. First, manipulating a mixture of flour and water produces gluten—the elastic web that makes bread dough deliciously chewy but that is too chewy for a pie crust, which should be light and tender. Second, chilling all utensils and ingredients keeps the small pieces of fat in the flour from melting, so that when the crust is baked they will

form layers, just as they do in a puff pastry.

There are several ways to avoid producing too much gluten, one of which is to handle the dough as little as possible. Another is to choose a low-protein flour, because that kind produces the least gluten. If you live in the South and can buy White Lily flour, use that. Or you can order white pastry flour, which is low in protein, from H. Roth & Son (P.O. Box F, 1577 First Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028). All-purpose flour does fine too. Whole-wheat flour makes a less flaky crust, but a tablespoon or two mixed with white flour won't damage the texture and will add color and a hint of the nutty flavor that people who make whole-wheat crusts are after. Refrigerating the dough relaxes the gluten and evenly distributes the moisture. Finally, because fat gets in the way of the water-flour combination that makes gluten, the purer the fat you use, the more delicate your crust will be.

The fat you prefer practically gives away your nationality. Americans use shortening or lard, both of which, being a hundred percent fat, produce the flakiest crusts. The French use butter, which in this country is usually 20 percent water, because they think it tastes better. I don't. Butter gives character to a crust, but the more you add, the more flakiness you lose. (That's why an all-butter crust works so well for fruit tarts: it's strong.) Flo Braker uses two ounces of shortening and one and a half ounces of butter per cup of flour. I prefer the classic American all-shortening crust—the usual proportion is a third of a cup of shortening per cup of flour. Packaged lard leaves a slight aftertaste that many people object to, although it makes a very tender crust. Pork-kidney fat—"leaf lard"—is purer and its flavor less obvious, but it is hard to find. Even when people can't actually taste lard in a crust, just the thought of it has a dispiriting effect on them; they look betrayed and slightly sick when they hear you've used it, and not only because of cholesterol.

Corby Kummer is an associate editor of *The Atlantic*.

July report on

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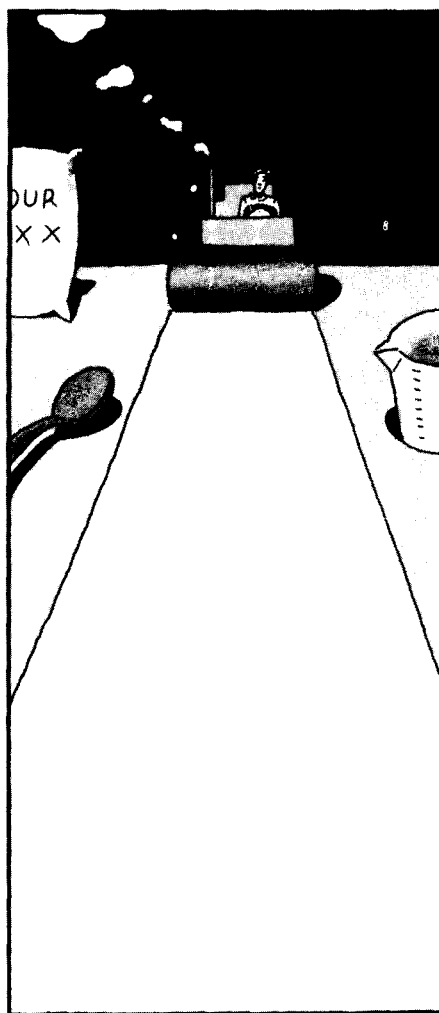
LITTLE, BROWN

Also available from The Atlantic Bookstore, page 101.

For a single nine-inch crust, use a third of a cup of shortening and one cup of flour mixed with a half teaspoon of salt (you'll probably want to make more than one batch; unused dough keeps for months in the freezer). Cut the chilled but not frozen fat into small pieces. The next step is to combine the fat and the flour—a task almost as scary as rolling out dough. (If you make a butter-and-shortening crust, add the butter first, because it will be harder to break up.) For years I used a food processor, arrogant in the knowledge that its steel blade could cut fat into flour more quickly and finely than I could. Braker never uses one, because she wants to see how large the fat pieces are and to feel the dough. She has persuaded me to go back to using a pastry blender: the kind with four thin parallel blades rather than four wires, because the goal is to cut the fat into pieces, not to mash it. They should range in size from tiny BB-shot-like pellets to lumps as big as the eraser on a new pencil. Courageous downward strokes with the pastry blender produce the fastest results. Use the blender to fold in flour from the bottom of the bowl, and clean the blades by scraping them with the back of a knife. Braker recommends a bowl of any color except white, so that you can see how much loose flour remains to be worked in.

Adding water is tricky. You want to add just enough for the dough to cohere—three to four tablespoons per cup of flour. Acid breaks down gluten, so many people substitute a teaspoon of white vinegar or orange or lemon juice for one of water. The liquid should be ice-cold. Start with two tablespoons, tossing with a two-pronged kitchen fork, and then add the third, a teaspoon at a time, sprinkling it over the dough and blending. Don't be shy about adding another teaspoon or two; a dry dough will be crumbly and difficult to roll, as Braker pointed out when I bragged about how little liquid I had been using.

When the lumps become the size of marbles, stop adding liquid. A food processor is most dangerous at this point, because if you wait until the dough forms a ball over the blade, you will have a rubber crust. Gently gather a handful of dough, and if it sticks together, it's ready. Touch the dough as little as possible, and use your fingertips and the heel of your hand: the palm is too hot. Divide the dough into as many pieces as you will roll out. Scrape each piece onto a sheet of foil. When dough is wrapped



in plastic, it sweats, which results in a gummy surface that will cause the rolling pin to stick unless you add more flour than is good for the crust. Foil, which is more porous, does away with this problem, and it is perfect for storing dough in the freezer.

Lift the four corners to press the dough into a ball that just comes together. I thought I'd invented this trick until I saw Braker do it. She said that she thought she'd invented it. Maida Heatter, in her *New Book of Great Desserts*, says that her mother used to do the same thing. Press the wrapped ball into a disk about an inch high, so that it will be easier to roll out later.

BEFORE ROLLING OR freezing the dough you should chill it for at least four hours (overnight is best) on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator, where it is warm enough for the gluten to relax and not so cold that the fat hardens quickly.

I've tried rolling on marble, and its coldness really does make the job easier, but I can't figure out where to keep a slab, so I don't have one. Instead I use a

canvas pastry cloth, which becomes seasoned with flour to make a non-stick surface. Add flour sparingly, and keep a brush nearby to wipe off the excess, but do add some, and keep the dough moving to ensure that it doesn't stick. Always rolling in the same direction, move the dough an eighth of a turn at a time to form a circle, a quarter of a turn to form a square. If any sticks to the pin, scrape it off then and there and flour the pin. Don't flip the dough over, or you'll end up adding too much flour. If the edges splay out and look like continents on a map, which always happens, trim the peninsulas and use them to fill in the bays. If you need more than a tablespoon of flour to stop the dough from sticking, refrigerate the dough for ten minutes before continuing. Braker uses guides to make sure that the dough is exactly an eighth of an inch high—the thickness at which it bakes best. At her suggestion, I glued together two strips of shirt cardboard to make a guide an eighth of an inch high, which I set next to the dough. I bent down to counter level to check the thickness and discovered that I had been rolling mine too thin. (So *that* was why it had been tearing.)

A glass or ceramic pie plate conducts heat best and is the first choice for baking, followed by black metal and then aluminum. Butter the plate for a crisper result and easier removal of the first wedge. To transfer the dough to the plate, drape it over the pin (keeping the side that was facing the pastry cloth down). Unfurl it toward you, so that you can keep the plate in view and center the dough. A pastry cloth will help you get the dough onto the pin. If this procedure seems too daring, fold the dough into quarters and unfold it over the plate.

Press the dough to fit, but lightly. Stretched dough will shrink in the oven and make holes. If the dough tears in transit, trim a piece from the edge and patch it—don't pull the sides to join them. Use scissors to trim the edge, leaving an inch all around. You can fold this under and crimp it for a single-crust pie, or, if you plan to add a top crust, leave it dangling. Give the dough another rest in the refrigerator, this time for half an hour, before baking.

After much experimentation I've decided to prebake bottom crusts whether the recipe calls for that or not. They always taste better. Lining the empty shell with foil and filling it three-quar-

ters full with aluminum weights or rice or beans might seem like an affectation, but it should prevent the crust from bubbling. (The rice or beans can't be cooked after they have been baked, but you can store them in a jar and use them forever as pie weights.) Bake for six minutes at 425°, remove the weights and foil, and continue for another five to twelve minutes at 375°—until the crust turns opaque (if you're going to bake it again) or until it browns (if you aren't). If the crust does start to bubble in the oven, prick it with a toothpick. As a precaution against juices from the filling seeping into the bottom crust, brush it with a thin layer of egg wash (made from an egg and a tablespoon of water) after you remove the weights and before you finish prebaking it.

Roll out top crusts the same way you do bottom crusts, and moisten the rim of the bottom crust to seal the two. Books mention several glazes to brown a top crust—a tablespoon of sugar sprinkled over it or a coating of egg wash or milk. The difference is in appearance rather than taste. If the filling is wet and you haven't prebaked the bottom crust, don't linger over decorating the top crust or the bottom will be soggy. I won't go into fillings except to say that letting a fruit filling marinate with sugar and some lemon juice for ten minutes or so makes it smoother and more flavorful.

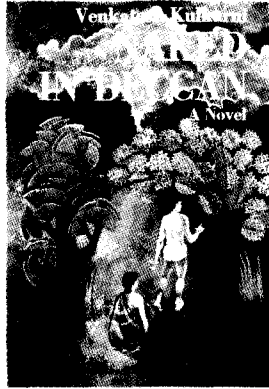
A fruit pie usually takes an hour to cook and is ready when juices bubble up and a tester easily pierces the fruit. Braker tests to see if a bottom crust that she hasn't prebaked is done, by listening for the tiny sound a toothpick makes going through it. Once I bent down beside the pie as she did this, and I actually heard a satisfying crunch when the toothpick broke through.

The instructions for preparing crust make it sound harder than it is. Practice will free you from worrying about the exact size of the pieces of shortening or the precise amount of liquid to use. Once you have some experience, it shouldn't take you longer than ten minutes to make the dough and three minutes to roll it out.

Don't believe friends who say, as I heard a woman exclaim when she pulled a pre-rolled circle of crust from a package, "It's a miracle! You never have to bother with crust!" The miracle turned out to taste like the box it came in, with a little salt. You do have to make your own crust for a good pie. Otherwise you might as well bake apples. □

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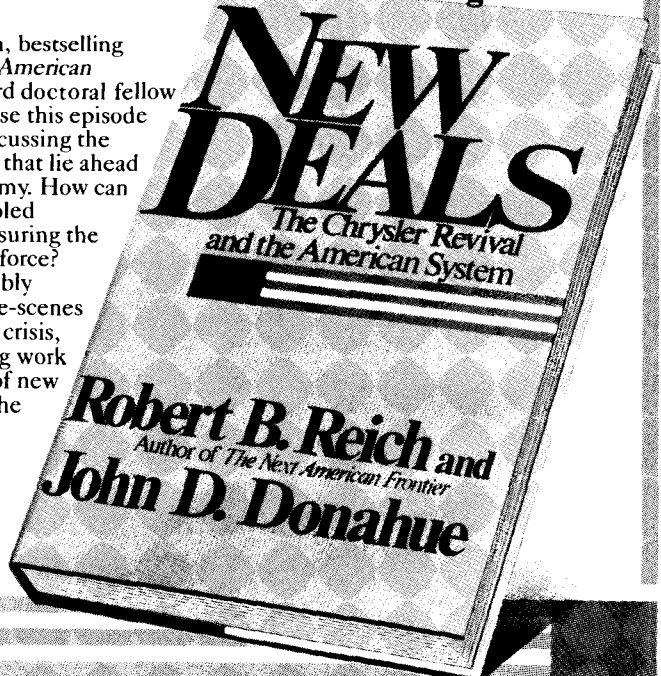
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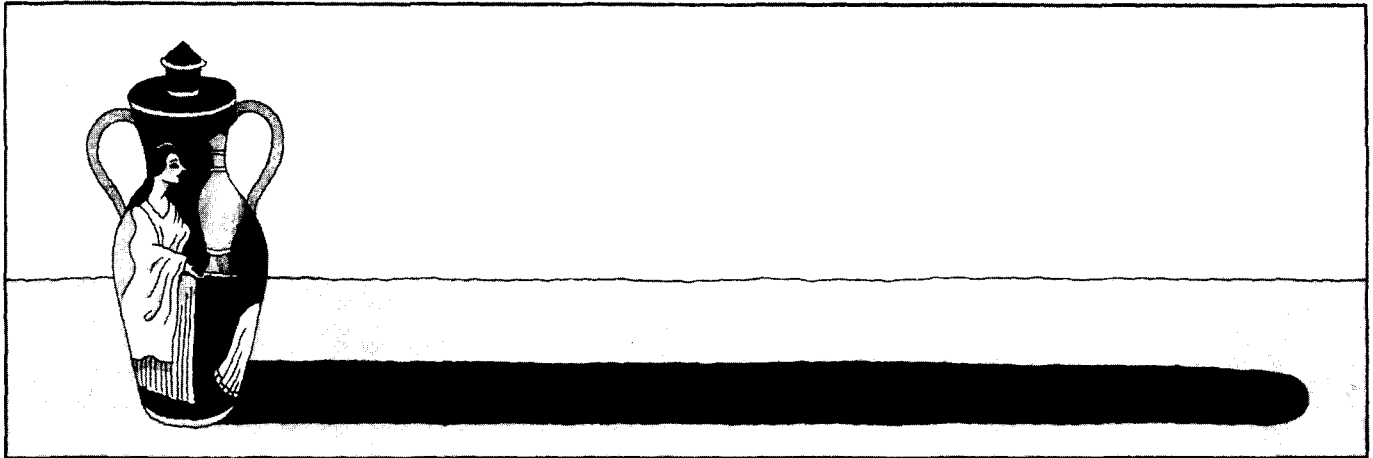
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INVISIBLE WOMAN

BY BERNARD KNOX

THE REIGN OF THE PHALLUS:
Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens
by Eva C. Keuls.
Harper & Row, \$24.95.

THE ARRESTING TITLE is explained in the book's first paragraph, a rolling barrage of feminist artillery.

In the case of a society dominated by men who sequester their wives and daughters, denigrate the female role in reproduction, erect monuments to the male genitalia, have sex with the sons of their peers, sponsor public whorehouses, create a mythology of rape, and engage in rampant saberrattling, it is not inappropriate to refer to a reign of the phallus. Classical Athens was such a society.

Some of the particulars in this bill of attainder suffer from rhetorical inflation: monuments with erect male members, for example, were indeed common in Athens, but these protuberances were details on statues of the god Hermes; whorehouses were regulated, like those of the French Third Republic, but not "sponsored"; and the creation of a "mythology of rape" is understandable in a culture that regarded female sexual initiative as unacceptable but had to explain the large company of heroic sons borne to gods by otherwise respectable

mortal women, many of them married. To the main burden of the indictment, however, classical Athens would have to answer, "Guilty as charged."

Only in recent years have scholars been fully awakened to the fact that the Greek *polis*, especially Athens (though perhaps Athens stands out because it is the one we know most about), was an exclusive men's club in which women had no political rights and no legal rights except those exercised through a male relative. Athenian wives were expected to remain at home in a secluded section of the house; in the words of Pericles' famous funeral speech, a panegyric of Athenian democracy, they were to aim "not to be talked about, either for good or for evil among men." This recommendation was so faithfully complied with on the male side that an Athenian wife's name hardly ever surfaces in Greek texts, though women are important threads in the tangled skeins of inheritance suits. One paradigm of female virtue, the young wife in Xenophon's treatise on domestic economy, who in addition to her other duties trains and supervises household slaves, stores and preserves produce from the farm, manages the annual budget, and produces clothes from raw wool, is known to us only as "the wife of Ischomachus." A homosexual culture was an almost predictable result of the exclusion of wives and daughters from social and public life, and one has only to look at Aristotle's cockeyed theory of conception (not to mention Apollo's notorious speech in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus) to be convinced that Athenian women were not given much credit even for the one thing that made them indispensable.

In this book, written with great verve and a laudable desire to make it "accessible to the general reader," Professor Keuls assembles an enormous body of evidence for the case against Athenian men. Most of the passages that she produces from the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries have not previously been cited in the context of social history. The most original feature of the book, however, is the exploration of the pictorial record: "the panorama of ideals, myths, fantasies and, above all, scenes of daily life that appears on the tens of thousands of Greek vases, scattered in museums all over Europe and the United States." She reproduces more than three hundred of these paintings from the classical period, many of them highly erotic, some grossly obscene. Her interpretation of the pictures (and most of them do need interpretation) is a "major resource" in her investigation of Athenian "phallocracy" in all its aspects—its exploitation of the female sex through marriage, concubinage, prostitution, and slavery; its supporting myths and social fictions (the cultured *hetaera*, for example); and its by-product, the homosexual relationships between grown men and adolescent youths.

She makes an impressive case, but though agreement on its main points can be withheld only by those who cling to sentimental fancies, it is by no means flawless. She sometimes proceeds on the basis of assumptions for which little or no evidence is produced—the idea, for example, that in wailing for the death of Adonis at his yearly festival the Athenian women "lamented their own, loveless lives," and the suggestion,

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chill reaches the area of the groin, Socrates suddenly uncovers his face, sits up, and says, "We owe a cock to Aesculapius. Pay it and do not forget." According to Keuls, however, what he uncovers is not his face but his groin, and there—hey, presto!—is an erect phallus. A rooster was the standard sacrifice to the healing god Aesculapius, but it was also, as Keuls points out, the conventional homosexual love gift.

Unfortunately, this sensational scenario is based on two questionable interpretations of the Greek text: the word for "uncover" does not specify the part of the body referred to, but its normal usage in the absence of such specification denotes the act of unveiling the face, not the groin; more serious, the Greek word that describes the coldness of Socrates' groin (*psychomenon*) is not likely, considering the solemnity of the context, to be what Keuls calls a pun on the similar word *psychoumenon*, which could also mean "come to life." Obviously, if Plato wished to avail himself of such an ambiguity, all he had to do was use the other word. Her interpretation also rests on the citation of "a known fact that men tend to have erections at the moment of death." This is a fact that does not seem to be known to medical authorities I have consulted (except as a side effect of slow strangulation), and such a phenomenon seems in any case unlikely when the subject is a seventy-year-old man dying from the effects of a paralyzing poison.

There are other surprising revelations offered by the book. One, which is promised in the opening chapter and delivered in the last, is concerned with the item in the full indictment which has not so far been mentioned in this review—the tendency of the Athenian male to "engage in rampant saber-rattling." This jocular formula might pass muster as a pejorative assessment of Athenian imperial policy, but its claim to relevance in a list of male outrages against the female sex may elude readers unfamiliar with the twentieth-century feminist claim that violence, and especially the organized violence known as war, is a function of masculinity, an extension to the political sphere of phallic aggression in sexual relationships. It follows that women are natural opponents of warlike action; this conclusion (which would seem to require modification in the light of the successful wars waged by Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, and Margaret Thatcher) is the basis for Keuls's charac-

teristically original solution to a notorious problem in fifth-century Athenian history: the identity and motive of those who one summer night in 415 B.C., as the great expedition prepared to sail for Sicily, smashed the face and the erect phallus of almost every stone statue of the god Hermes in Athens.

These images stood outside houses and at crossroads, for the god was a protector of the house and also of travelers; their mutilation was an inauspicious omen for the expedition, a blow to public morale. In spite of a hysterical witch-hunt that produced a wealth of unreliable confessions and even more unreliable denunciations by paid informers, little light was thrown on what was clearly a highly organized act of psychological terrorism. Thucydides records the popular belief that it was the work of oligarchic conspirators who planned to overthrow the democratic regime. There is little evidence for this idea, but it seems likely enough. Athens was an imperial democracy, its public works and social support system subsidized by tribute from subject cities; enemies of the regime were naturally opposed to territorial expansion that would increase its revenues and popular support. Oligarchic conspirators did, in fact, succeed in overthrowing the democracy temporarily after the disaster in Sicily, and some of these same men were among the so-called Thirty Tyrants, who, backed by Spartan troops, ruled a defeated Athens at the end of the war.

But Professor Keuls has a different candidate: the women of Athens. Disgusted with a government that had already waged more than ten years of bloody but indecisive war and was now about to send to a far-off destination the largest Athenian force ever assembled, and deprived of any means of political expression, the women of Athens, in what Keuls calls "an act of impotent rage," attacked the blatant symbol of their oppression.

Like Socrates' final erection, this extraordinary event has gone unrecognized for many centuries, only to be revealed now, in the age of the raised consciousness. It passes belief, however, that no one noticed it at the time—that organized gangs of phallus-bashing women, equipped, presumably, with hammers, roamed the streets of Athens in the dead of night without exciting comment. In the context of the women's life, which Keuls has so skillfully and convincingly re-created from the evidence, respect-

able women were not to be seen on the streets even by day. Her explanation that women were able to circulate by night during the "counter-cultural" festival of the Adonia will not hold much water: one thing we do know about the festival (and we do not know very much) is that women celebrated it on the roofs of their own houses.

But potential readers should not be discouraged by these aberrations. Pioneering studies like this are all too apt to pursue their new insights far beyond the limits of probability. In this case, once the wilder flights of speculative imagination are discounted, a solid core remains, a rich and memorable survey of the abject condition of women in a society that for creative brilliance in art, literature, politics, and philosophy has hardly a rival in the history of Western culture. □

A NOVEL OF OBSTETRICS

BY ANTHONY BURGESS

THE CIDER HOUSE RULES
by John Irving. Morrow, \$18.95.

JOHN IRVING'S NEW NOVEL has a first printing of a quarter of a million copies and an initial advertising budget of \$200,000. With success already assured, neither he nor his publisher can strenuously object to the disparagements of reviewers. Mr. Irving has already (so I gather from press reports surrounding his recent visit to Vienna, a city that has had a good deal to do with the formation of his culture) complained that Europe has not taken him as seriously as his native continent has. In particular the British have had grave reservations about the worth of *The World According to Garp* and *The Hotel New Hampshire*. (The earlier *Water-Method Man* has been pretty generally praised.) The reservations naturally have everything to do with the rather wide differences between European and American notions of what a novel ought to be.

In the American novel there is at work what may be termed a principle of discontinuity. This operates chiefly in the area of violent action. I have read nov-

Anthony Burgess is the author of 99 Novels: The Best in English Since 1939.

els, though not by Mr. Irving, in which a husband and wife sit affectionately at dinner and after the dessert the wife or husband takes a hatchet to the other and spreads his or her entrails over the tablecloth. Such things happen in real life, though there is usually a powerful motivation of suppressed hatred. Or drink or drugs are at work. In American fiction such horrors tend to be gratuitous, unforeseen, inexplicable. The excuses for them are that the modern world is a terrible place, that worse things happen in war, and that the devil is always waiting to mess up expectations of human decency. In *The World According to Garp*, you will recall, there is a notorious dismemberment. In *The Hotel New Hampshire* there is a nasty case of rape and a nasty punishment for it. Mr. Irving likes to administer shocks so as to persuade us that life can be terrible. This is probably in order, but in art shocks should have something to do with a moral or aesthetic pattern, not with gratuitous accident. That, in the European view, is what art is about.

I picked up *The Cider House Rules* in some fear of occasionally being nauseated for my own good. This, thank God or Mr. Irving, did not happen. We can be morally depressed by the main theme, which is the terrible truth that some children are born unwanted or, being unwanted, are not permitted to be born, but the depression is balanced by our knowledge that there are people like the hero, Dr. Wilbur Larch, a saint of obstetrics, as ready to bring the unwanted into the world as to abort them. The setting is the St. Cloud's orphanage in the state of Maine, and readers may wonder what this has to do with the title, or the other way round.

There is another locale nearby, a commercial apple orchard where cider is pressed, and the seasonal workers there have to follow rules about smoking in bed and so on. I think the point of the title is that there have to be rules for everything and that apples can be metaphors for human souls as well as for human sin, which sprang out of the eating of an apple (Adam and Eve broke the rules of the first cider house). This gloss may be too naive. Umberto Eco, commenting recently on his novel *The Name of the Rose*, said that titles ought to mislead (*The Three Musketeers* is about a man who becomes the fourth musketeer), so that the author shall not seem at the outset to be imposing his own interpretation on what should be a machine

for generating a multitude of interpretations. But he refers to a kind of novel that is raw material for deconstructionists. *The Cider House Rules* is not like that at all; it is in the plain, realistic tradition. The trouble is that it is a little too plain for nearly six hundred pages: we long for tougher intellectual or aesthetic engagement than Mr. Irving is ready to give us. His characters are just not interesting enough.

We may make an exception of Dr. Wilbur Larch, who, with the aid of a couple of adoring if aging nurses, runs the St. Cloud's orphanage. He is a cloudy kind of saint, addicted to the inhalation of ether, his life spent in dealing with the consequences of sex, guilty about his one youthful sexual escapade,



which gave him the clap. He breaks the law by performing abortions, but he considers that it is better that this should be done expertly and cleanly than by filthy operators in back streets.

Some of the children permitted to be born in the orphanage, unwanted by their mothers, are adopted, others not: the St. Cloud's orphanage becomes, like the Hotel New Hampshire, an eccentric center for the raising of a large, heterogeneous family. Homer Wells, who, like Garp, is a kind of symbolic orphan, is one child. Attempts are made to adopt him, but they are all unsatisfactory. One, in which a very athletic couple try him out first on a camping holiday, is tragicomic, for Homer sees his intending foster parents drown under ridiculous circumstances. Homer's world remains the orphanage, where he reads *Jane Eyre*

aloud to the children at bedtime and learns under Dr. Larch's instruction to become a very expert obstetrician, though he never takes a degree or a diploma. What he refuses to do is to perform an abortion: the fetus has a soul; life is sacred.

Homer bestrides the two worlds of the orphanage and the apple orchard. Through his relationship with Candy and Wally, who come to the orphanage for an abortion, he gets into apple farming. The war comes, Wally's plane is shot down over Burma, Homer falls in love with Candy and has a son by her, Wally returns crippled and impotent. The moral problems of Homer—his attitude to abortion, his betrayal of Wally—come together when his son, Angel, falls for the black girl Rose Rose, who must be saved from an impossible pregnancy.

At the end everything comes right for everybody except Melony, a tough girl orphan, who is delivered as a cadaver for dissection but is decently buried in the Maine earth. Homer replaces Dr. Larch at the orphanage, Wally and Candy grow big in the apple world, and Angel grows into a novelist. "To Candy, a novelist was also what Homer Wells had become—for a novelist, in Candy's opinion, was also a kind of impostor doctor, but a good doctor nonetheless." That probably depends on the novelist.

THERE ALWAYS HAS to be a strong subjective element in literary criticism, even more so in that hurried and debased branch of it called reviewing. If I do not like this book, it is because it seems to me to lack art. An artist would have thought of compression, not the wind-filled prolongation that makes for the best seller. (Burgess's law of the American best seller states: The longer the novel, the more people will buy it. If it were short, they could read it too quickly and hence think they had thrown money away. Bulk makes it a piece of furniture.) It also lacks qualities that I think desirable in fiction—wit, irony, even good, honest, knockabout humor. The only remotely memorable piece of intended humor is a dirty limerick about the Duchess of Kent, which I, as an Englishman, would have to find unfunny even if it were not. The characters, with the exception of the doctor, who is too closely identified with his function to be interestingly complex, are mostly animated pasteboard. Homer, whose speech is chiefly limited to

"Right" (it might as well have been "Garp"), the brutal Melony, the war casualty Wally and his wife, just do not generate enough drama to sustain the substance of a book as long as this.

Henry James, in a letter to the young Hugh Walpole, who had as much art as Mr. Irving and became quite as successful, said something worth pondering:

Don't let any one persuade you—there are plenty of ignorant and fatuous duffers to try to do it—that strenuous selection and comparison are not the very essence of art, and that Form *is* [not] substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it. Form alone *takes*,

and holds and preserves, substance—saves it from the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding, and that makes one ashamed of an art capable of such degradations. . . . There is nothing so deplorable as a work of art with a *leak* in its interest; and there is no such leak of interest as through commonness of form.

Mr. Irving may comfort himself in the face of James's lofty aesthetic by reflecting that James never wrote a best seller. Or, if he wishes, excuse himself by saying that the subject of discharged dead fetuses has found an exact stylistic analogue. □

came an entrepreneur with money and influence in high places. Poor little Farol was gussied up with streetlights, fake Moorish architecture, imported gypsy dancers, and the witless tourists hooked by these accouterments. The real fishing soon ceased, for the whole population went to work in the tourist trade. Mr. Lewis deplores the change, but he makes the town's transition from picturesque languor to modern hustle funny as well as sad. He tends, however, to underestimate what it must have been like for the Farolense in the days when they lived all their lives in doubt about the arrival of their next meal. Tourists may be vulgar, but they are a reliable cash crop.

BRIEF REVIEWS



VAN GOGH IN ARLES by Ronald Pickvance. *Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harry Abrams, \$24.50.* Thanks to Van Gogh's numerous and detailed letters to his brother Theo in Paris, it has been possible for Professor Pickvance to establish with considerable certainty the chronology of the paintings and drawings that the artist created during his stay in Arles. The fifteen months that he spent there were the peak of Van Gogh's career, and both the quantity and the quality of the work he produced are astounding. Professor Pickvance has quoted lavishly from the letters, allowing Van Gogh himself to explain, whenever possible, what he was doing and why he was doing it, as well as the struggles with problems of health and money that beset him. This is a beautiful, exciting, even awe-inspiring book, for it tells the story of demonic industry maintained against heavy odds.

AGATHA CHRISTIE by Janet Morgan. *Knopf, \$18.95.* Ms. Morgan was given access to all Christie's papers, and her biography is therefore the most comprehensive of the several books devoted to that somewhat enigmatic author. Christie is a provocative figure—an Edwardian gentlewoman of virtuous habits and no formal education who made a highly successful career on her ability to devise tales of devious murder. Her biographer can explain, from examination of her notebooks, how Christie worked out plots (they sometimes hung around for years), but

why her invention ran so steadily to crime remains, perhaps properly, a mystery.

THE WATER HOUSE by Antonio Olinto, translated by Dorothy Heapy. *Carroll & Graf, \$16.95.* Mr. Olinto is a retired Brazilian diplomat who, while serving as cultural attaché in Lagos, studied the links that survive between Brazilians of African descent and their ancestral homeland in Nigeria. He has converted his findings into this novel about the Silva family, former slaves who return to Nigeria and prosper. Their success is due to the enterprise of Mariana, who begins as a bewildered child dragged along by her grandmother and ends as the matriarch of a clan. Her progress involves many years and many people—rather too many of both in terms of narrative tempo. Much of what Mr. Olinto includes in the story is of interest for the light it throws on Nigerian society and on the crisscross of tradition and trade over the Atlantic, but much of it is also of minor importance in relation to Mariana's affairs. The novelist has resolutely reported all he knows. The reader may be tempted to skip.

VOICES OF THE OLD SEA by Norman Lewis. *Viking, \$15.95.* For several years in the late 1940s Mr. Lewis spent his holidays in a small, poor, remote fishing village on the Catalan coast of Spain. The place, stagnant for centuries, retained antique customs and superstitions and feuds that delighted the British visitor. Then

A SOLDIER'S LEGACY by Heinrich Böll, translated by Leila Vennewitz. *Knopf, \$11.95.* Mr. Böll, an eventual Nobel Prize winner, wrote this short novel in 1947. Its theme is the destruction of all civilized values, entailed by service in the German army of the Second World War, and although the book is not the equal in skill of his later work, it holds attention and establishes the author's moral concern and intelligent purpose.

THE DANGEROUS SUMMER by Ernest Hemingway. *Scribner's, \$17.95.* In 1959 *Life* magazine commissioned Hemingway to return to Spain and report on the state of bullfighting in 10,000 words. He wrote 120,000. Ferocious cutting produced the necessary magazine piece, of which nobody, including the author, thought highly. Later cutting has produced this book, centered on the professional rivalry between a pair of fine bullfighters and on Hemingway's friendship with the younger of the two. It would probably be difficult for an author in the best of shape to maintain a suitable quality of excitement and suspense in his writing while being, as Don Ernesto was, steadily red-carpeted—and at the age of sixty, Hemingway was not in the best shape. The book is not the best Hemingway. What is impressive about it is how close to the best so much of this work by a sick and worried man comes. James A. Michener has provided a sympathetic introduction plus information on bullfighting terms and procedures—most useful to readers who cannot tell a muleta from a veronica.

TIME GATE by Charles R. Pellegrino. *Tab Books, \$16.95.* Mr. Pellegrino's book is subtitled "Hurtling Backward Through History," and hurtle it does, by geometric progression, from 1984 to the origins of

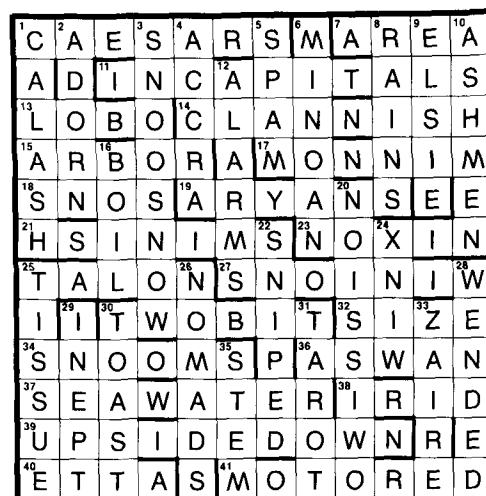
the universe. Along the route the author presents much scientific information and speculation, and does it lucidly for a non-scientific reader. This is no small accomplishment, for, as Mr. Pellegrino points out, "As we accelerate away from time present the world becomes more alien, more interesting, and far less knowable." Lack of knowledge encourages the consideration of possibilities. Mr. Pellegrino rather fancies the notion of living creatures inside frozen moons.

LAST LETTERS FROM HAV by Jan Morris. Random House, \$14.95. The peninsula of Hav has been inhabited or conquered by troglodyte bear worshippers, Achaeans, Greeks, crusaders, Arabs, Venetians, Cathars, pirates, Turks, Russians, and a League of Nations tripartite mandate—to name only some of the outfits whose descendants linger on there in what appears to be a state of cooperative anarchy. It has been visited by a small army of distinguished travelers whose opinions, favorable or not, are quoted, as are the works of local authors. Hav is somewhere on the coast of Turkey, or would be if it existed. It does not. Ms. Morris has wittily invented the whole place, creating either an amusing spoof of the travel-book genre or a new kind of novel in which the protagonist is the character of a region, for while Hav is imaginary, the East Mediterranean conditions it represents are real.

THE HUNGRY SELF by Kim Chernin. Times Books, \$15.95. As a result of her work in the therapeutic counseling of women with what are politely called "eating disorders" (anorexia, bulimia, fad dieting, and chronic overeating), Ms. Chernin has evolved a theory to account for the prevalence of such afflictions among contemporary females. Guilt and anger against the mother are, she believes, the root of the trouble, which is then exacerbated by the lack of any social formula through which a young woman can establish her separate identity as an adult. The elaborate argument is, as psychological theories are prone to be, supported more by rhetoric than by practical evidence. It also contains alarming generalities. "It is impossible to imagine," the author announces of an action that it is quite possible to imagine, although it may indeed be inconceivable among her unhappy clients. Eating disorders, however, are admittedly a serious problem and resistant to treatment; any attempt to understand them deserves consideration.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Answers to the June Puzzler, "CODE- BREAKING"



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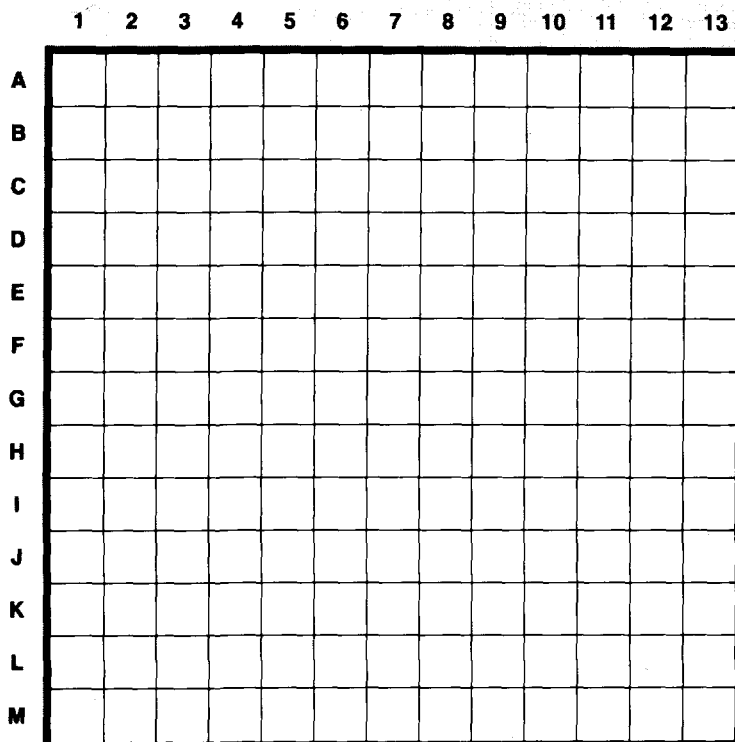
THE ATLANTIC PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

ACROSTIC

Letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriate diagram squares, will spell out a quotation—the first three lines of a four-line song stanza. The initial letters of the clue answers spell out the stanza's concluding line. About a third of the letters in the diagram can be derived from more than one clue. Solvers are encouraged to shade in unused diagram squares. Answers include six proper nouns.

*The answers to last month's
Puzzler appear on page 101.*



CLUES

1. I sock it to an evil city (9)
(B9,M1,C3,D5,K2,J7,L10,G6,H12)
2. Gangster has heroin in tower? (4)
(K10,M11,E6,I6)
3. Swat bugs on back of Chinese junk (5)
(H7,F9,A13,M7,I3)
4. Gold rush month (6)
(C1,M4,L13,A6,F10,H2)
5. Colony member enters short dwelling (6)
(M10,G4,C12,K9,G9,F3)
6. Star carries stolen \$1000 rifle (7)
(J8,B1,H8,E13,J1,D3,H13)
7. Insect I had cleverly pierced by head of pin (5)
(F6,M13,J12,B5,D9)
8. Audibly got out of the way of pipe (4)
(K6,H9,C9,M2)
9. State in West is opposed to lawlessness (9)
(G13,B2,B13,M5,E5,J11,A13,K12,D7)
10. Suppressing urge, he's in knots (7)
(G10,M12,B6,B10,I9,L9,M1)
11. Christian scientist in a whirl (4)
(C6,D9,F7,E2)
12. Recess elicits disapproval, then approval (4)
(K9,B12,I12,M6)
13. You can be found in hothouses (4)
(D11,F1,C8,I13)
14. Refurbishing yacht, wash doors (9)
(A2,B7,C4,L8,F11,J6,H1,E2,M10)
15. Beating a broth violently (6)
(J7,A1,E10,H5,C8,L10)
16. Object about relative's reasoning (8)
(A10,E4,B9,J11,M6,L3,D7,E8)
17. Foolishly trade hog to animal keeper (8)
(I6,J10,L1,B11,M8,C10,L12,K6)
18. Gambling game for rent, in a way (8)
(I11,E5,A6,H10,E1,J5,G2,F2)
19. Actor Michael going back to get a primitive computer (5)
(I1,L2,A7,F9,M5)
20. A poet has nothing on (6)
(D5,A5,I7,C12,K1,H12)
21. Novelist with \$100 in battered portmanteau (6,6)
(G8,I11,E6,K2,G6,B8,C9,C1,K13,I12,E13,D4)
22. Quiet, elastic bushes (9)
(J8,D13,H5,M4,A5,D1,H3,I4,F3)
23. Chopper headgear on Mr. Huntley (7)
(F11,K4,M7,L8,E10,K7,G8)
24. Translate movement of printer to alien (9)
(K5,H13,B11,L11,K1,B3,M3,H3,E11)
25. Greek character these days is collecting stamps (9)
(B3,A11,L3,D2,F6,H2,J13,H10,A4)
26. Made in raw, rough, tin (7)
(J6,M3,I7,D3,E8,G4,B4)
27. Number the GI changed (5)
(A3,J3,L13,F5,D11)
28. Patching torn headwear (8)
(C13,F13,J1,I9,E11,B10,L1,K13)
29. Tossed over, you might say (5)
(A9,J2,L12,K7,G13)
30. Indian garb I'd put back, keeping warm (5)
(F7,C5,J10,G9,F13)
31. Poetaster contrived musical works (9)
(B12,G1,G11,I4,A12,E3,J5,H1,B13)
32. Before attempt, get very cold (6)
(H7,C2,L2,I8,K11,A4)
33. The middle of ships in the sound (5)
(B8,K4,I2,M9,A8)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

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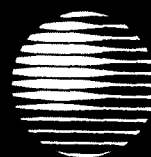
"...exactly what I was thinking."



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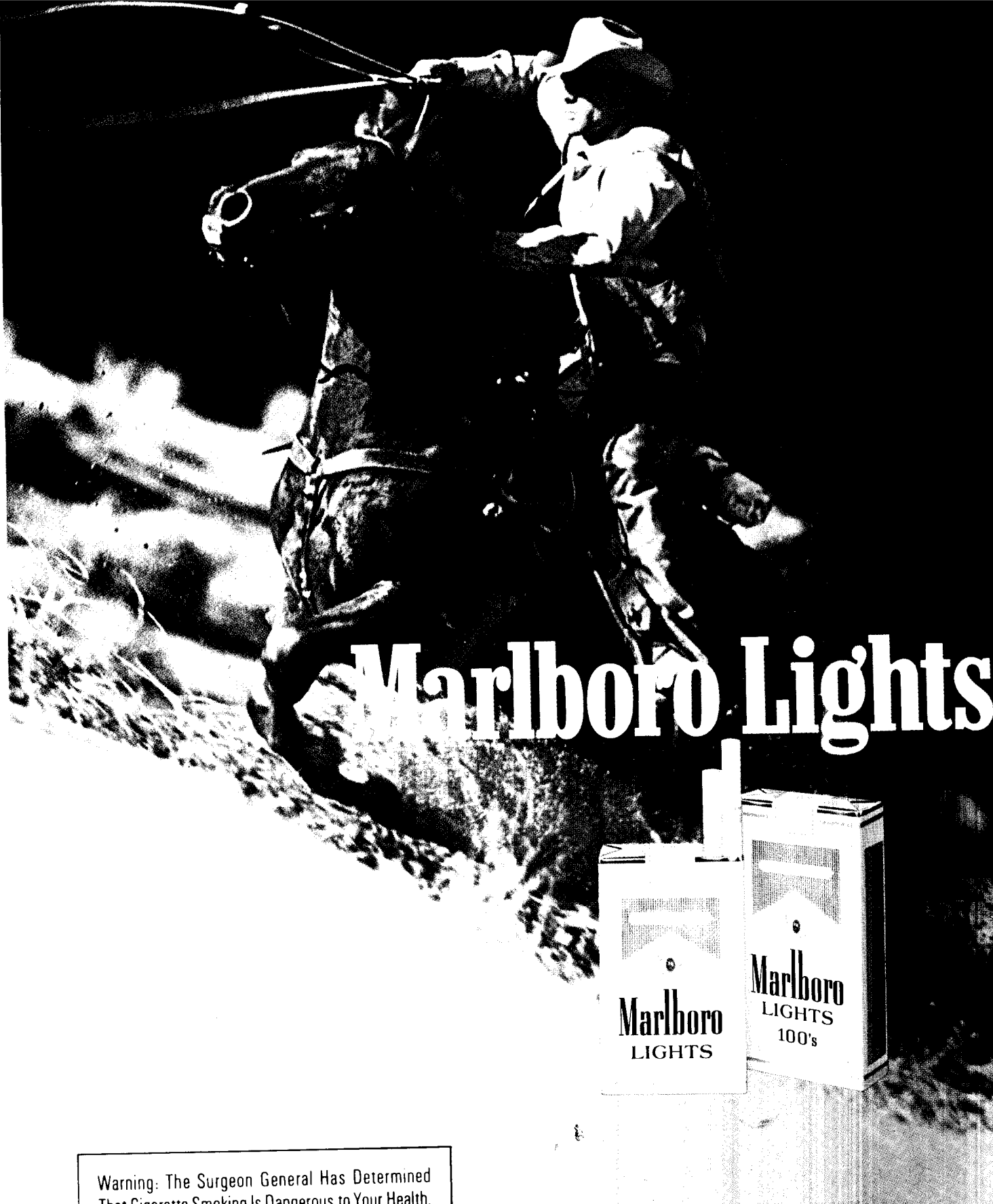
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